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DOMESTIC SCENES.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY LADY HUMDRUM,

AUTHOR OF MORE WORKS THAN BEAR HER NAME.

Tedious the tale with lengthen'd lectures fraught:
We're less by precept than example taught.

ANONYMOUS.

VOL. I.



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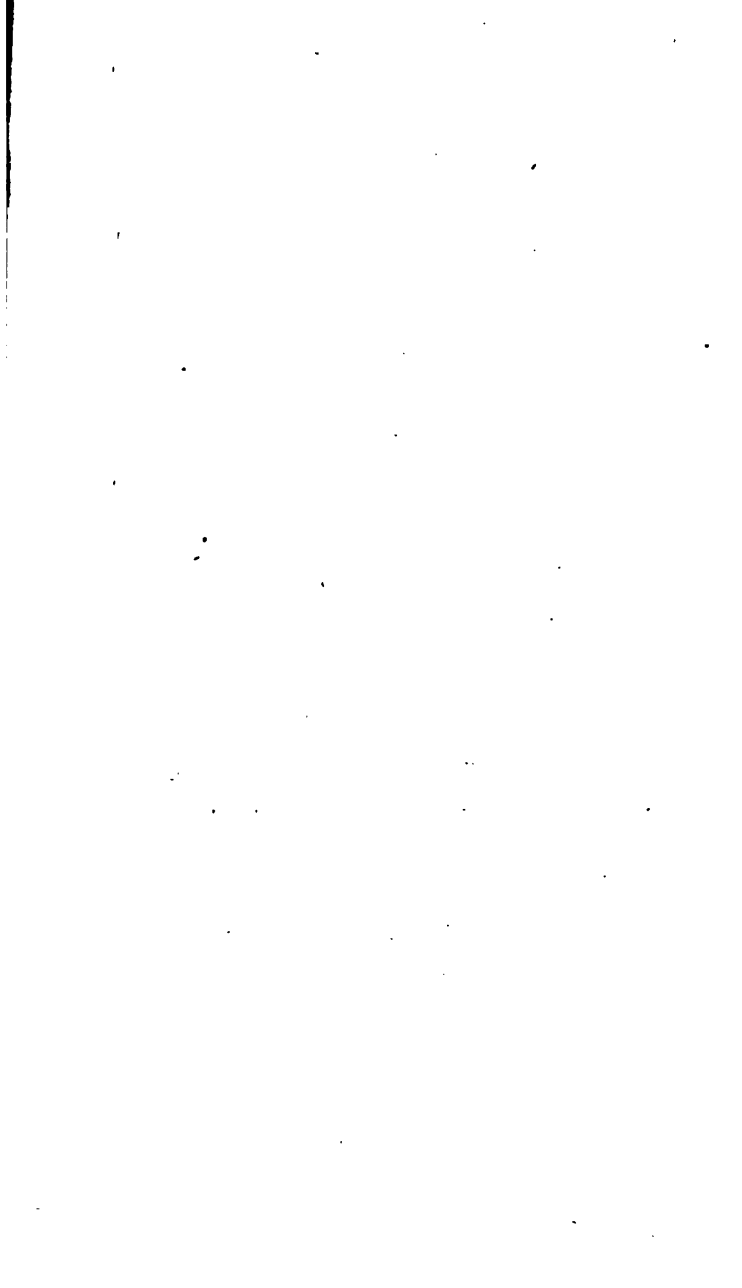
DOMESTIC SCENES,

HUMBLY INSCRIBED

TO

WHOM THEY MAY AMUSE.

SHOULD an approving smile be excited — a tear of sympathy be dropped — or a right feeling be strengthened in the perusal of these pages, the Author will be satisfied, that the time bestowed upon them has not been wholly misemployed.



DOMESTIC SCENES.

CHAP. I.

THE family at Hurstbourn Priory were assembled round their breakfast table, and Mr. Villars was eagerly unfolding his newspaper, in search of the leading paragraph, when the eye of his son Henry, catching the ship news, he joyfully exclaimed, "The Alcmena arrived in the Downs!"

"Thank Heaven!" cried Mrs. Villars, "our poor mourner will then be restored to us in safety!"

"And my letter have reached just in time to secure our meeting her on the road—how lucky!" said Emily; "do, dear

brother, order the carriage to the door !
I can be ready in a very few minutes—”
starting up from her untasted breakfast.

“ Stop ! my dear child,” said the agitated mother, “ you must not forget yourself—sit down quietly and eat your breakfast—recollect you have something to undergo !—Sophia’s distress will put your nerves to a severe test, depend upon it.”

“ Aye—and that will give me time just to run over this debate. I see it’s very important, and you shall take it to her—she will like to have the first tidings of it,” said Mr. Villars.

“ In the present miserable state of her mind,” Mrs. Villars observed, “ it is not very likely that politics should—”

“ It’s on that very account, my dear,” interrupting her : “ you know Soph was always my little politician—she’s the only one of the family that ever entered fully into my views of things—and nothing so likely to divert her thoughts from dwelling

upon the death of Delmere, as this very debate in my hand—it's admirably argued, let me tell you."

Emily having, in obedience to her mother, taken her cup of tea, now disappeared with her roll in her hand, and Mrs. Villars let the subject drop. Shortly after, she left the room, to assist in forwarding her children's departure; and quite aware of what her husband's 'running over a debate' would be, she engaged to save Emily from any displeasure the apparent inattention to her father's wish might occasion.

In fact he soon became so deeply absorbed in the subject matter before him, as wholly to lose sight of his children's journey, on which they had proceeded some miles, ere he had reached the end of his paper, which was never a very short process, even when the four sides of it were not, as in the present case, nearly filled with a debate. The fear of overlooking any thing material, causing

him to go it over and over again, backwards and forwards, till not even an advertisement escaped. It will naturally be concluded that some object of private interest prompted this excessive solicitude respecting public measures ; no such thing—it was pure disinterested concern for the good of the nation, which predominated over every other consideration in his mind, whenever that most merciless of all tyrants, the gout, left him the power of turning his thoughts from the racking tortures to which it had of late years condemned him ; and he discussed the public weal in his own chimney corner, with all the ardour as well as the perspicuity that had marked his parliamentary career, before the state of his health obliged him to relinquish his seat. His eldest daughter's eagerness for knowledge of every kind, and uncommonly quick and clear intellect, enabled her to follow his political and financial disquisitions to his heart's content. Fortunately

for her, she was at the same time possessed of discrimination sufficient to save her from seeking the unenviable celebrity of a female politician, and reserved her talents on that score for her father's sole use and enjoyment.

It was the arrival of this daughter that was now so anxiously expected. She had lately become a widow—her husband, colonel Delmere, had fallen in the field of heroes in the Peninsula, and left her disconsolate in the fullest sense of the word.

Her loss seemed indeed severe—he had been her first and early choice, he stood high in military fame, he adored her; their union had taken place in the short interval between his return from active service in the West Indies, and his regiment's sailing for Spain, where, in the very first action in which he was engaged, he received his death wound.

She was for some time in a state so nearly bordering upon distraction, as to

make it impossible to think of moving her; but the assiduous attentions of an English brother officer's family, had at length so far succeeded in soothing her despair, as to enable her to undertake the voyage home, under the protection of some of the female part of it who were returning to England.

At Exeter they were to separate, and each pursue their own road; of course it was thither that Henry and Emily were hastening to meet their sister; and they made such good diligence, that they reached the inn before her.

After the first affectionate embraces, which she returned with some degree of warmth, she remained in the state of silent abstraction in which her companions represented her to have performed the whole voyage—neither weeping nor seeming to attend to any thing that was passing about her.

The Priory cottage, situated at one entrance of Mr. Villars's grounds, had

been fitted up for her reception; and ~~there~~ she finally arrived, the veriest image of deep-rooted grief, that painter or statuary could have figured. The meeting with her parents was productive of a flood of tears, which seemed to give her some relief.—“It was seldom she could obtain it,” she said; and a momentary gleam of interest played over her faded countenance as she looked round on those by whom she was encircled—but it did not again recur.

Emily had proposed taking up her abode with her sister for a time, but this seemed to distress her, she wished to be alone—she cherished every appearance, as she indulged every feeling, of that wretchedness to which the remainder of her life must be devoted; arguments were of no avail, she spurned at consolation, and prided herself in withdrawing her thoughts wholly from a world, which no longer contained the only object that could have made life desirable.

It was at length agreed in the family to refrain from any attempt at argument or consolation, and to content themselves with taking it in turn to devote the day to seeing her sit

‘ With leaden eye that loved the ground,’

in weeds deeper than weeds had ever been before, far as she deemed her woe transcending every other woe.

Time passed on, but brought no healing on its wings to one so enamoured of her grief as the wretched Sophia; a faint occasional effort to converse, in consideration of her companion, only served to prove her total inability to follow up any train of thought on ordinary topics.

Mr. Villars had not been remiss in furnishing his quota of consolation, in morning, evening, and weekly papers, reviews, political pamphlets of every sort and description—on one side of the question, that is to say; for as to ministerial sophistry and blandishments, he was so

completely on his guard not to be led away by them, as never even to give them a fair reading ; proving himself in that respect at least a worthy pupil of Burke's school, he 'hugged his prejudices the closer for being his prejudices'*—but he only had his share in the general mortification, of finding it all in vain ; Sophia would neither read nor listen ; she was impenetrable to every sort of interest, but what she could in one way or other connect with her affliction.

Had she not been his favourite daughter, in whom he could never discern a fault, he might have found in his heart to accuse her of some thing approaching to wilful perverseness, in thus resisting such rational means of comfort as he held out to her. As it was, however, he only declared he could not understand it.

“ Madame n'en reviendra jamais ! c'est clair comme le jour cela,” said Mademoi-

* See Burke on the French revolution.

selle Victoire, a French waiting-woman, whom Mrs. Delmere had engaged in Portugal, on her own maid's objecting to continue among the "dirt and vermin, and bad living to which she was there exposed, which no mortal creature could away with," she said, "as was'nt born and bred a heathen like all them outlandish papishes." So Mrs. Harrison was sent home—and Mademoiselle Victoire, who had been left on the *Pavé* by the death of a French countess whom she served, taken in her stead.

"*Madame n'en reviendra jamais !*" she said. "*Figurez vous, Monsieur, qu'elle n'a pas jetté un pauvre coup-d'œil sur le miroir, depuis que je suis à son service ; et tous les jours ce maudit closs-cap ! et cette vilaine robe de laine ! et croiriez vous encore qu'elle s'en est fait faire une douzaine ! et qu'elle dit qu'elle n'en portera jamais d'autre ! par ma foi j'en ytiens plus ; il y a de quoi en mourir.*"

Henry, to whom this lamentation was addressed, knew that his sister's high wrought enthusiastic mind was apt to run into extremes, and trusted that Victoire's life might yet be saved by some unforeseen occurrence.

There was a member of the family too little accustomed to keep herself in the back ground, not to require a particular introduction to the reader; this was Mrs. Katharine Villars, a maiden sister of Mr. Villars, commonly known by the name of aunt Katty. She compensated a slight deficiency of intellect, by a considerable share of good humour, and eagerness to please; she was short, fat, and lived in a bustle; ever ready with her assistance where it was wanted—and where it was not; and had advice at every one's service—a commodity not very generally acceptable even when issuing from better organised heads than poor Katty's, and consequently from her rather apt to be overlooked, at which she now

and then ‘could not chuse but wonder.’ She had been fertile in enumerating the proper topics of consolation that ought to be enforced to Sophia ; but as her inspirations were seldom much to the point, her solicitude to take her turn in being with her niece was warded off (with the delicacy, however, which Mrs. Villars and her children never failed in evincing for her dependent situation) by suggesting the greater importance of her presence in the village school of industry. So she could but be busy and fancy herself of use, Katty was content.

“Here is a puzzling circumstance,” said Mrs. Villars, as she ran her eye over a letter she had received ; “my brother writes word, that a very important packet has been entrusted by poor Delmere to a friend, whose absence from England kept him ignorant of his death till very lately, and who received it with the strict injunction of delivering it into the widow’s own hands if he should fall—I suppose

no consideration whatever will induce her to admit him."

"Bless me sister! not admit him!" exclaimed aunt Katty, "why she *must* you know—and if you like, I'll step and explain it to her directly."

"Not so fast—not so fast, good Katty," cried Mr. Villars: "*must* never yet had much weight with Sophia.—I really don't know how we shall prevail upon her to see this man."

"I should think it might be accomplished," said Henry thoughtfully.

"Dear me, to be sure that's what I say," rejoined Katty, "where's the difficulty? what *must* be, *must*, we all know."

"Pho! be quiet Katt, and don't distract Hal.—Well, come, what's your device?" looking impatiently at his son.

"I think we must alarm her with the idea of something worse, and then she may perhaps submit to compound for that."

"Aye, well! that's a very good thought! go to her then directly, and see what you can make on't."

"I had better think it over a little more at leisure," returned Henry; "tomorrow will do quite as well, you know, the post don't go out till afternoon."

"Dear me now, it's so odd to waste so much time in thinking! and I never could find I got any good by it in my life," observed Katty. "I always act by impulse."

"We might have gone near to guess as much, Katt," retorted Mr. Villars laughing.

Charles and Laura Belmont now dropped in; they were son and daughter to Lord Belmont, whose estate adjoined to the Priory.

"We are plotting," said Henry to Charles, "how to bring my sister Delmere to see Sir Edward Arundel:" and he told him the circumstance.

"Singular enough!" replied Charles.
"I should have conceived it quite as difficult to bring Sir Edward to see your sister,—but he volunteers it, you say."

"It rather appears he can't help himself—but on what ground would he be likely to object?"

"Have you never heard his story? he is a professed woman-hater, ever since Miss Vyner jilted him some years ago."

"Well, to be sure!" said Katty, "it's not at all surprising any gentleman should take it amiss to be jilted! but then to go and hate all womankind is very unfair, because really you know, Mr. Belmont, one woman may be very different from another!"

"Was there any thing much out of the common *routine* in the business?" Henry asked, with an arch look.

"Why, yes—it was something more than the every day occurrence of pre-

ferring a larger fortune and higher title. It had been a long courtship—she had professed unbounded attachment—resisted a marriage her parents had pressed ; every thing was settled—lawyers at work—when the sudden death of her brother made her a considerable heiress ; upon which she immediately contrived to pick a quarrel with poor Arundel, and has since married the Duke of Deerham.”

“ And that ermine mantle,” said Mr. Villars, “ will prove a panoply of wondrous efficacy, in screening its wearer from being too harshly judged by her peers—the world is lenient to titled culprits—I have heard the Duchess of Deerham much cried up.”

“ I can’t imagine by who,” said Laura with quickness, “ for I assure you, Mr. Villars, the world was far less surprised than Sir Edward at what happened ; she was always deemed a very artful woman, and the Duke is now believed to be as

much her dupe as her lover was before. But I could find in my heart to quarrel both with you Charles and Mr. Henry Villars, for your saucy 'every day occurrence,' and 'common routine;' only that without my auxiliary, Emily, I cannot hope to make good battle against two.—Charles would not have dared in her presence to have uttered such treason against the sex. When will she emerge from her cave of melancholy, Mrs. Villars? I can never get sight of her now!"

She accompanied her accusation of Henry, with one of her most attractive smiles, but it was lavished upon an insensible, whose literary taste confined his admiration of female charms to the Helens, the Didos, the Angelicas, the Clorindas, &c. whose bloom immortal bids defiance to the power of time.—His hour was not yet come, though he asserted that whenever he should meet with the

exact counterpart of his sister Emily, he was fully prepared to fall in love. At the present moment, indeed, his mind was too much engrossed with Sophia, even to admit of the "retort courteous," with which he was in the habit of playing off Laura's attacks.

Mrs. Villars, who had been struck with the suffusion Laura's last remark had spread over the cheek of her brother, saved him from attempting an awkward defence, by saying, "We are, indeed, doubly eager to conquer Mrs. Delmere's reluctance to come amongst us again, from apprehension that Emily's spirits are giving way to the constant misery she is witnessing."

"I expect," said Henry, recovering from a fit of abstraction, "a curious interview between Sophia and Sir Edward Arundel: I suppose the only way to bring it about, will be to alarm her with an idea of the alternative being the ne-

cessity of her going up to London—She will then fly to the lesser evil.”

“A bright thought, Hal!—do act upon it forthwith!” cried Mr. Villars.

“I’ll fetch Emily home this evening, and then try what may be obtained of Sophia,” replied Henry.

CHAP. II.

HENRY found his sister in better spirits than she had yet been since her misfortune; Emily had the art of soothing and engaging her attention without apparent premeditation.

“ I begin to look forward with some impatience,” said Henry, “ to the day that will bring my father and mother the indulgence of seeing you again amongst us, Sophia.”

“ My presence can no longer be an indulgence to any one, Henry—I only look forward to being borne with in future.”

“ Well! give us an early opportunity of displaying our powers of endurance in that way.”

“Some six months hence I may possibly summon resolution to ——”

“Mix with the world,” interrupting her: “yes, yes, *that* we depend upon, but——”

“Never, brother—never more!—the bare sound of the word is hateful to me.”

“Then, I suppose, we must be satisfied with your confining your society to your intimate acquaintance.”

“I could not bear my intimate acquaintance to behold the wretched thing I am now become.”

“Only your old and particular friends?”

“Never more shall I emerge from the bosom of my own family.”

“Make haste into it, however, or how will you be able to muster courage for your necessary expedition to London?”

“London, Henry!” with a look of dismay.

“You know there is no escaping from the form of proving a will before a doctor of law!”

“ Oh, Henry! you are causelessly alarming me! there is no will! there can be none.”

“ You may be under a mistake, dear Sophy, a letter this day from my uncle Valcort to my mother”—he stopt on perceiving her excessive agitation.

She left the room.

“ For pity’s sake!” said Emily, “ do not pursue the subject at present, we shall lose all the ground I have been gaining.”

“ Try to pacify her then by the assurance that we will fall upon some mode of obviating the necessity of her having to appear.”

“ But as there can be no such necessity, why distress her with the idea?”

“ Do not counteract me, dear Emily! you shall know all as we go home, but let me see her again when she is more composed!”

Emily went to her sister, and in half an hour they returned to Henry.

"What struck you with such dismay, Sophia?" he asked.

"The horror of having to go to London to appear before a stranger."

"Would you sooner forego any advantage from the will?"

"All and every advantage, rather than pay that price.—I care for nothing now, but never to be seen or heard of more."

"Would it be equally distressing to you, if a person could come hither for the purpose?"

After a moment's consideration, "No—not near—five minutes would suffice for that—and, five minutes of resolution I could command, if requisite."

"Then my uncle may be informed, that if it can be so settled, you are willing."

"Certainly—but in the case of a will, I know it cannot : so I am safe."

"There being a will, may, however, be an assumption of mine—suppose it

were only a deposit, directed to be delivered into no hands, but your own—”

“ Then I can have no option, but to receive it, be it what it may !”

A fresh gush of tears impeded farther utterance, and Henry having carried his point, hastened home to impart his success. He informed Emily, by the way, of the circumstance, who very much doubted of her sister's abiding by her engagement, when she found who it was she must receive ; her present determination being to exclude all youthful society beyond her own relations, and so to devote herself to the memory of her husband, that no man should ever again come near enough, even to be refused.

“ Dear Emily ! is there not too much of exaggeration in all this ?”

“ Knowing Sophia, I would rather have it so, than that she should be more calm and moderate upon the subject.

She is perfectly sincere in it all, but I trust to its excess for wearing it out."

This favourable result was immediately imparted to Mr. Valacort, and the arrival of Sir Edward Arundel was daily looked for.

It had been agreed that no intimation of the person expected should be given to Sophia, till his being actually on the spot should make it too late for her to retract, and Katty received a caution to be upon her guard; as she had of late occasionally found her way to her niece, under colour of the reports she had to make to Emily respecting the school.

For two days she scrupulously adhered to the secrecy enjoined, but on the third it occurred to her that if she could persuade Sophia to make some little improvement in her dress, it would be a great point gained, so she forthwith set about suggesting the matter.

"I have been thinking, my dear niece," she began, "that you will lose all your

fine hair, by keeping it so constantly covered with that frightful close cap."

"I am very easy about the matter, dear aunt."

"But you can't go on being easy about it all your life, and you ought to look forward a little to the time, when you will want to be smart again."

Sophia shook her head.

"And really it's put on so monstrous unbecoming besides."

"Victoire puts it on as she pleases — the eyes are closed, whose approbation alone I could ever seek.—"

Tears forced their way, and she became silent.

"Why, now, I declare, my dear, to hear a woman of your sense talk so unnaturally, it's what I have no manner of patience with, for, as I say, though to be sure, losing a husband is a very sad thing, yet as it stands to reason that we must all die some day or other, but bless me!

"What's the matter, you look so pale, can I get you any thing to take?"

"No, nothing, thank you!"

"Well, well, perhaps you are not in the humour to listen to reason just now, so I won't tease you—only I just came to beg a favour, which is, that you would bring a little hair forward to-morrow, and not let your cap come quite so much over your face—that's all.

"Why to-morrow?"

"On account of your being seen, you know."

"Seen!—by whom?"

"Why, have you quite forgot who you have agreed to receive?"

"Oh, true! the lawyer with the packet."

"Lawyer!—not a bit of a lawyer, I promise you; but mum for that! they shan't accuse me of betraying—"

Sophia, horror-struck with the idea of a plot to entrap her into seeing Heaven knew who! eagerly interrupting her, said with some indignation,

“ On no account would I suffer you to betray any thing to me, aunt Katharine, but I shall take it as a favour if I may immediately see my mother.”

“ To be sure you shall, as fast as I can send her to you, but only do oblige me about the cap !” she added, popping her head back into the room after she had gone out of the door.

Mrs. Villars was not slow in complying with her daughter’s request. Sophia instantly asked “ who was bringing her the packet ?” Mrs. Villars, a little distressed at the unexpected question, answered however, without hesitation, “ Sir Edward Arundel.”

“ Gracious heaven ! Sir Edward Arundel ! and was I, who have renounced all society, to have been entrapped into seeing Sir Edward Arundel ? a gay man of the world ! never, believe me, shall that succeed ! I could not have thought my brother capable of such a deception.”

“ No deception was meant, my dear

child—the communication was only delayed, that you might not brood over the painful necessity of seeing a friend of your husband's longer than could be helped ; you would have had timely notice to summon your fortitude for the trying occasion."

" I must feel obliged for the intention then, however mistaken, but be assured, my dear mother, I will never see Sir Edward Arundel."

" Not see Colonel Delmere's confidential friend ?"

" Of such intimacy of friendship, I may very reasonably doubt.—I must have heard much more of him had it existed."

" Does not the trust prove the fact ?"

" It may prove very different from what it is represented."

" But surely the injunction cannot admit of a doubt."

" At all events there can be no difference between putting it into the hands of

my mother or mine.—I entreat you, dearest mother, to save me from this distressing interview.”

“Any thing in reason, my child, to save you from distress I would do; but there is a sacredness in the last injunctions of those we love, that I never could bring myself to infringe.”

“It could not be a last injunction! Sir Edward Arundel was far distant at that dreadful moment: this packet, whatever it may be, he must long have had in his possession.”

“Have you any private reason for objecting to the sight of Sir Edward Arundel in particular?”

“O none! none, but as a man of the world—such as I will never more hold intercourse with; of himself individually I know nothing—he was seldom alluded to, though spoken of with friendship when he happened to be named; but as a gay man—a woman’s man—my heart shrinks from all such.—I conjure you,

mother, to save me from this odious interview!"

"I think, my dear Sophia, I never knew you so unreasonable before; but I will consult with your father and brother what may be done; I cannot take it upon myself."

When Mrs. Villars had talked the matter over with her husband and son, Henry was again deputed to try his powers of persuasion, but she adhered to her refusal.

"Then we must let the matter rest," said he, "till Sir Edward's arrival, and see whether he will consent to recede from the letter of the injunction."

"You can't suppose Henry, that when I so determinately resist the arguments of all those I love, I shall suffer my actions to be swayed by the opinion of a stranger!"

"It appears probable to me," said Henry thoughtfully, "that there must be some third person's fate involved in

this communication, which makes a personal interview so important."

This idea struck upon Sophia's feelings. After some struggle, and a considerable pause, she exclaimed with generous and characteristic warmth, "If there be any ground for such a supposition, I will see Sir Edward Arundel, cost me what it may."

"That is felt and spoken like yourself, my sister; and I will endeavour to ascertain how far Sir Edward may be informed upon the subject before you are again urged."

Sir Edward Arundel arrived the following day, and sent a message from the inn requesting an interview with Mr. Villars.

Mr. Villars was become so great a cripple, as seldom to be able to move about, even upon crutches; a civil apology was therefore returned, stating his inability and inviting Sir Edward to the Priory.

On no consideration would Sir Edward

have exposed himself to the hazard of encountering more females than her he was compelled to see; he therefore begged Mr. Henry Villars would do him the favour of coming to the inn.

Henry went, and found an elegant gentlemanly man, evidently under great depression of spirits; having an air of melancholy abstraction that awakened interest in the very first moment.

“I have many excuses to make, sir,” he began, “for giving you the trouble of coming to me; but the wretched state of my health and spirits, wholly unfits me for society; you are probably informed of the peculiar circumstance that compels me to wait upon Mrs. Delmere; may I have recourse to your goodness to pave the way for my reception? I have so entirely lost the habits of social life, that I am in danger of appearing very deficient in proper respect for the widow of my deceased friend, by confining myself, as I must do, to the literal compliance

with his injunction of delivering the packet into her own hand—for I am really unequal to conversation—and nothing short of the promise exacted by Delmere, could force me for one moment into the presence of a female.”

These last words were spoken with visible agitation.

“Nothing could be more consonant to my sister’s state of mind, than this exemption from the necessity of conversing with a stranger,” was the reply ; “for be assured, sir, her reluctance to this meeting is quite as strong as your own. She professes an intention so decided to dedicate the remainder of her life to the memory of her lost husband, as not again to admit any man into her society, except those belonging to our own family. If, therefore, you could possibly be satisfied to deliver the packet into the hands of my mother in an adjoining room, who would give it to my sister in your

hearing, it would be a very material relief to Mrs. Delmere."

"*That*, the superscription of the packet will show I am not at liberty to do ; I am bound to act up to the letter of my promise ; but certainly this unexpected coincidence will greatly facilitate the matter to both : may I then beg of you to ascertain the hour at which it will suit Mrs. Delmere to receive me."

This was readily undertaken, and Henry left him, as much struck with the dignity of his air and manner, as with his extreme dejection, and repeatedly expressed his surprise that such a fate should have befallen such a man.

Sophia, relieved beyond her hopes from all apprehension of being drawn into conversation, appointed the next morning for this silent meeting without farther hesitation.

If Victoire's delight was great at hearing of the expectation of a male visitor,

what was her dismay at being ordered to add the large bonnet and black crape veil to the "*maudit* closs cap." She exhausted all her rhetoric in vain; there was no appeal from the determination. "*Ah! juste ciel!*" she cried, "*cela va de mal en pis!*"

At the appointed hour, Sir Edward Arundel was at the cottage door. On his name being announced, Sophia rose from her seat without looking up.

Sir Edward advanced, and with a bow, putting the packet into her hand, said in a tremulous voice, "The superscription will show you, madam, that I was compelled to this intrusion on your retirement."

The words of the superscription were these, "I adjure you by our friendship to attend to my request, to deliver this, when I am no more, into Mrs. Delmere's own hand, and no other, and when she is alone."

She took it with evident trepidation; the sight of the hand writing overpowered all her assumed fortitude; speech was denied her—with difficulty she curtsied her thanks—

And Sir Edward Arundel withdrew.

CHAP. III.

It was a considerable length of time ere Sophia could recover sufficient resolution to open the packet.

These were the contents.

‘If ever these lines are put into the hands of my Sophia, her Delmere will be no more. Should life be lent me, I may possibly bring myself to impart, what it is of importance she should know, but what I have yet wanted courage to reveal in the short period of our blissful union.’

Here the packet dropped from poor Sophia’s hands, and she sat stupified and lost in overwhelming recollections.

Fortunate was it, that she had remained alone ; or the circumstance Colonel Delmere had so cautiously sought to conceal, must have been betrayed to whoever had been present. She continued in a state of apparent insensibility, till a plentiful effusion of tears at length brought her relief—and gathering up the papers which had been scattered in their fall, she went on.

‘ A most disgraceful family occurrence has been thus far successfully kept from the world, and it is torture to me to disclose it, even to you, the beloved of my soul—in the event of my death, however, you must be informed, for reasons which will soon be apparent to you.

‘ I have a sister—Oh God ! how shall I tell you that infamy attaches to her name !

‘ Placed at a boarding-school on the death of my mother, and afterwards under the care of an ill chosen French governess, her beauty and accomplishments

made her the pride of our family. Various and splendid overtures of marriage were made to her, but she rejected them all. Love for a villain had taken possession of her mind ; Frank Arundel, (cousin to the friend to whom I entrust this deposit, but every way unworthy of the connexion) with a handsome person, and talents superficial as her own, captivated her light affections at a ball. He laughed at matrimony ; Almeria had no principles to oppose to his wit and art, and soon became his victim.

‘ The consequences may be foreseen ; when the infatuated girl became sensible of the necessity for concealment, she had recourse to her governess, an adept at intrigue, who having *emigré* relations in the north of England, suggested the expedient of a visit to them, and easily obtained my father’s permission for Almeria to accompany her. There she was introduced by a feigned name, and her husband said to be abroad ; the distance

between Hampshire and Cumberland seemed a security against detection.

‘ Almeria, however, imprudently informed her lover of the plan, who soon followed her, and obtained admission in the family as the husband’s brother.

‘ Just at that period my brother William returned from a cruize ; in his way to London he met with an old messmate who induced him to spend a day at his house on the border of one of the lakes ; in the course of conversation they adverted to their school-fellow Frank Arundel, and William’s friend said, he had been seen lounging about in that neighbourhood, probably engaged in some amour, and they agreed by way of frolic, to give him the fright of a detection, by assuming the character of relations of the girl’s ; they succeeded, but too well ; I cannot enter into the cursed particulars. Suffice it to say, that William, on discovering his sister, challenged her seducer.

‘ They were both wounded—William severely, Arundel mortally.

‘ Almeria was thrown into premature labour, but the infant lived—and lives—and it is solicitude for the future fate of this poor child, which has drawn from me all this odious detail. To you, my Sophia, I look for the protection and care of her; but how to take the charge without betraying the infamous secret, must remain for your affectionate ingenuity to devise.

‘ The few remaining sad particulars necessary to be told, are, that the duel transpired, but not its cause. Arundel died—William was removed to London for the best surgical assistance, and wrote me the horrid details as soon as he was able to hold a pen.—I need not dwell upon my feelings. I applied for leave of absence, determined to use my utmost influence with my father, to part with the Hampshire estate, that Almeria’s

removal from that neighbourhood might be accounted for without giving rise to suspicion.

‘ I found my father dangerously ill with spasms brought on by the cruel intelligence, and he died.

‘ I had come with the full purpose to see Almeria, and endeavour to bring her to a sense of her misconduct, or, if I failed, to make her parting with the child a condition of the provision to be allotted to her ; but she had withdrawn from the scene of her detection and sufferings, and concealed her retreat. In the apprehension of her being reduced to absolute want, I was compelled, however reluctant, to entrust the fatal business to Sir Edward Arundel, and leave funds in his hands for her supply, whenever he might be able to discover her abode. After months of fruitless inquiry, he heard of her by an unlooked for chance, just as he was also ordered abroad, and could therefore only leave directions with his banker to make

quarterly remittances to her by her assumed name, and write me word of what he had done.

‘ I wrote to her ; in her answer she bewailed her errors, and their dreadful consequences, but earnestly entreated to be allowed to remain in the obscurity to which she had condemned herself, stating at the same time, that her recovery had been attended with circumstances so unfavourable, owing to the misery she had endured, as to have brought on complaints that must ere long prove fatal.

‘ I could do nothing farther till my return, and you may recollect that I then talked of a necessary journey into the north, before the completion of our marriage ; but her dread of the meeting caused her again to remove, and appoint a circuitous mode of remitting her annuity. She spoke of her child, as if she lived but in its sight, and yet with the want of consideration that has marked

every action of her life : she gave no clue by which to find it, when the death of the parent should leave the poor infant destitute of all protection.

‘ On our departure for Portugal, I was once more obliged to have recourse to Sir Edward, whose arrival was daily expected, and to whom alone I could confide this important packet, with the certainty of its safely reaching your hands in the event of my death, and securing your protection for the unhappy little girl whenever the wretched mother shall be no more.’

It may be supposed that much time and many tears went to the perusal of this distressing narrative. Of all tasks that could have been imposed upon the open-hearted, sincere, and generous Sophia, that of *inventing a subterfuge* was the most impracticable.

In revolving and reflecting upon the circumstances which she was not very

speedily able to do with any degree of clearness, the only resource that offered itself to her perplexed mind, was to consult Sir Edward Arundel, a measure which must involve a necessity of farther intercourse.

Sickening thought!—yet unavoidable!—every consideration of honour and delicacy, with respect to Delmere, precluded her imparting the contents of the packet to any third person whatever. The very precautions he had taken to guard the knowledge of them, even from her own family, imperiously pointed out the line of conduct he expected from her: still, towards this, what could she possibly do? could she write? enter into correspondence with a stranger!—the danger besides of writing upon so confidential a subject!—an interview was the only alternative—and this might afford the means of discussing at once all that was necessary, and have done

with it. A strange step 'too, for her to take! but Sir Edward must himself be aware it was unavoidable; and the respectful distance of his manner—the considerate feeling he had evinced for her ungovernable emotion, softened the embarrassment in some degree;—her husband's high opinion of him too—their long friendship—he was, in short, the only person she could have brought herself to see again; and after all, there was no other resource.—

So she sent for her brother.

She informed him that the contents of the packet could not be imparted even to him; but that they involved the absolute necessity of her again seeing Sir Edward Arundel.

Henry was all astonishment; there was an eagerness in her manner which nothing had yet excited.

“ I apprehend he must by this time be gone.” He replied.

“ My dear brother, lose no time to ascertain whether he be or not—it is of the utmost importance I should see him.”

Henry's curiosity was extraordinarily raised, but he hastened to make the inquiry she desired.

CHAP. IV.

SIR Edward Arundel's nerves were in so shattered and irritable a state, that the agitation of having been forced into the presence of a woman, had greatly disordered him ; he had been in a slight degree a "*malade imaginaire*," and fancied himself unfit to travel that day. Having shut himself up, therefore, with orders not to be disturbed, he was a good deal surprised, and not very well pleased, when his servant brought up the name of Mr. Henry Villars, with an earnest request to be admitted.

Sir Edward could frame no valid excuse, and the visitor was shown up.

Henry apologised for an intrusion to which he was compelled, he said, by his sister's earnest wish for another interview.

Sir Edward looked aghast.

"She said," continued Henry, "the contents of the packet made it of the utmost importance."

"I am extremely unwell, Mr. Villars.—I am shocked at my apparent rudeness to Mrs. Delmere—but if she knew the torture I endure in female society—and indeed in all society—if it were possible to commit to writing—"

"I am quite sure," interrupted Henry, "there must be some cogent reason against writing for my sister to have so far conquered her own reluctance to society of every kind, and more particularly (you may recollect, sir, I mentioned it to you) to that of men, as to have proposed an interview—there seems

to be something in the packet she has received from you that strangely unhinges her; she spoke with an earnestness no other subject has yet awakened since poor Delmere's death."

The import of the packet now indeed first recurred to Sir Edward's recollection, for hitherto he had solely dwelt upon the miserable necessity of having to deliver it. His mind had of late been so engrossed by his own unhappiness, that he had not reflected upon the subsequent intercourse which the nature of the contents might produce. Instantly aware there could be no escape from this vexatious result, he civilly apologised for his present inability, but begged to assure Mrs. Delmere he would obey her commands the following morning.

He felt that he wanted the intervening time to obtain composure sufficient to go through a consultation, which he foresaw must run into length. But as he reflected upon the matter more at lei-

sure, he also came to feel that the retired dignity of Mrs. Delmere's deportment was calculated to inspire respect, although she was a female; she had besides so effectually concealed herself from him, that he must acquit her at least of vanity, for he had always heard she was very handsome. Her whole soul's being given up to grief too, so many months after Delmere's death, showed that there were still such things as faith and affection in woman.—Upon the whole, he found himself in a better state of preparation for this undesirable visit than he could have expected, and began to look forward to the next morning with some degree of calmness.

Sophia, on the other hand, though she could not rejoice in the unhappiness which caused his reluctance to female society, yet experienced considerable relief in the security it afforded her against either flattery or unwelcome assiduities; and notwithstanding that she passed a

sleepless night in revolving the topics she had to discuss, she arose with far less dread of the interview than she could have imagined.

Meanwhile, Henry's surprising report of a second interview requested by Sophia, diffused much satisfaction at the Priory.

At an early hour the next day, Sir Edward Arundel waited upon Mrs. Delmere.

"You would scarcely be surprised, I imagine, sir," she began, "at the message I found myself compelled to send by my brother; as I have every reason to suppose you acquainted with the contents of the packet entrusted to you."

"With one circumstance of it, but too well indeed, madam; Mr. Arundel was unfortunately my near relation."

"You were commissioned I find to forward the means of subsistence to his unhappy victim."

"My being suddenly ordered abroad,

obliged me to leave the care of the remittances to my banker, but I find they have been duly attended to."

" May I inquire, sir, whether funds were deposited for the purpose?—So near a relation of—of—" the words stuck in her throat.

" Funds were deposited to the amount of the annuity," he hastily interrupted, to save her distress.

" You probably know her present abode, and can point out the means of communication with her."

" She has hitherto taken successful pains to conceal it, by the circuitous mode she has adopted for the receipt of her annuity ; her signature, however, is regularly received, which proves her to be still in existence, though from the feeble unsteady characters of the last, I should conceive the final close to be at hand."

" And is there no practicable method of tracing her actual residence ?"

Sir Edward considered.

She went on, "Penitence so sincere and lasting is entitled to great commiseration. I have done with the world—and with society—but to the claims of misfortune I cannot be insensible. I would instantly go to her, if I knew where to find her."

Sir Edward, for the first time, raised his eyes to her face—it was uncovered. In the agitation of the expected interview, she had forgotten her bonnet and veil, and most carefully had Victoire kept them out of sight.

There was something indescribably affecting in the contrast of the habitual depression grief had stamped on her countenance, and the glow with which the benevolent feeling she had just expressed for a moment irradiated it; the effect upon Sir Edward was as instantaneous, but not so brief; emerging at once from the dry cold manner in which he had thus far answered her, he said with animation, "I will not rest till I

have discovered her retreat, and you shall be informed of it without delay."

A slight bow of acknowledgment was all the reply.

After a pause, she resumed, "There is another circumstance, sir, of too delicate a nature to be committed to paper, which rendered a personal interview indispensable. I must have recourse to your advice as to the colour to be given to my adoption of the child; I am debarred from imparting this distressing business to my own family, and consequently from consulting with them upon it; but adopt her I certainly shall, whatever difficulty may attend the measure."

"Have you well considered, madam?"

"A *duty*," interrupting him with quickness, "can admit of no consideration, but of the best means to accomplish it; and the difficulty here, lies only in the danger of betraying what it is so important to conceal."

"Will you allow me, madam, a few

hours to think over what may be done, and give me leave to wait upon you in the evening, to impart the result?"

"It appears to me, sir, that it is unnecessary to give you that farther trouble at present—you are so good as to undertake to discover her abode, which may be safely imparted to me, under cover to my brother; I will immediately go to her, and according to the state of health in which I find her, I may be enabled to form a judgment of the period when her release shall consign the child to my care; it will then be time enough for me to learn what may have occurred to you as to the most unsuspecting mode of introducing her into my family."

"I beg pardon for my precipitation," he said, with a sense of mortification he could not very well account for. "I conceived you wished to take immediate charge of the child."

"And rob the unhappy woman of her only remaining comfort?—O no!"

“ Her errors you do not then consider as a dangerous example to her daughter, should her life be prolonged ?”

“ Her contrition and sufferings might rather convert them into warnings ; at all events it is not by me that her calamity shall be increased—but I am now, sir, trespassing unnecessarily upon your time—with a journey on hand, you must wish to be relieved.”

Sir Edward was not just then conscious of any such wish, but he believed she felt it, and immediately took his leave.

Indeed, Sophia, who had exerted herself to the utmost, could but rejoice the trying task was over ; though she acknowledged to herself that Sir Edward was not to be classed with mere men of the world ; it was evident also, that misanthropy had not dried up the source of benevolence in him ; and his general dislike to female society, stamped him the only man with whom she could bear

to foresee the necessity of holding farther intercourse.

Much of the trouble Sir Edward Arundel had proposed taking to discover the abode of Mrs. Wilson (as she chose to call herself), was unexpectedly saved by receiving information at his banker's, that a Mr. Jones had just been there, and brought a letter from her, by which he was appointed to receive the annuity for her in future. This letter was accompanied by one addressed to Sir Edward Arundel, but directed not to be delivered to him till after Mrs. Wilson's death.

To Mr. Jones, Sir Edward immediately repaired, and readily obtained the information he wanted.

Mr. Jones was nearly related to the person in whose neighbourhood Mrs. Wilson had lived ever since her quitting Cumberland. He reported her to be in the last stage of a decline; said that on receiving news of Colonel Delmere's death, she had written the letter to Sir

Edward, and entrusted him with the delivery of it into the banker's hands. He believed it to relate wholly to her child, about whose fate she seemed to suffer considerable anxiety. He imagined it was the interest he had expressed for her forlorn and calamitous situation that had occasioned her placing this confidence in him.

Sir Edward now calling to mind his friendship for Delmere, as well as his own affinity to the child, formed the desperate resolution of encountering one female more. He would go himself to the unhappy woman, and soften her dying moments, by reporting the interest expressed by Mrs. Delmere for the little girl, and bearing testimony to the very respectable protection in which she would be placed with her.

He felt himself unaccountably roused to action, and could scarce help smiling when he recollected the difficulty he had found to bring himself into the presence

of Mrs. Delmere, and compared it with the alacrity with which he was now volunteering a similar step.—He was half tempted to allow that Mrs. Delmere might have some share in producing this change—she certainly had somewhat shaken the inveteracy of his prejudice against the sex, by showing him that there actually existed a woman capable of strong attachment and above coquetry. As to her he was now about to see, he merely considered her as a suffering human being, and as such entitled to the commiseration of every benevolent mind. He hoped, too, that an interview with her might bring to light something that would serve as a plausible cover to the introduction of the child into Mrs. Delmere's family.

Amidst these and various other cogitations upon the subject, he reached the abode of Mrs. Wilson, and gained admittance ; but found her in so reduced and weak a state, that it was but very gradually he could unfold his purpose, and at

different, and sometimes distant intervals he could ascertain all the particulars it was so important to know ; her excessive agitation in the first instance, having brought on a paroxysm of such alarming violence, as to give reason to apprehend it might snap the attenuated thread, by which her life still hung ; and every subsequent meeting in a degree renewed the danger.

He had, however, the real enjoyment of perceiving that he soothed and comforted her lacerated mind by the fair prospect he held out for her child. The circumstances he gathered from her were briefly these.—

The duel had taken place at the hour when labourers usually leave off work ; a sufficient number of them were soon brought together by the report of the pistols, to take charge of conveying the wounded men to different farm-houses, till medical aid could be obtained. Doctor Prior, the rector of the parish,

happened to pass as Frank Arundel was carrying into a house, in a state of insensibility: perceiving him to be a gentleman, and conceiving that better accommodation and greater quiet might be requisite than the farmer's large family of children could admit of his affording to the wounded man, he benevolently ordered him to be taken to the parsonage, which was near at hand: proper applications soon restored animation, but the surgeon who had been called in gave no hopes of recovery.

The worthy divine, judging it highly important to acquaint the sufferer with his real situation, took upon himself the painful task, and performed it with all the gentleness and feeling the occasion required. It threw the dying man into a horrible state of despondency; his wailings and strong expressions of remorse clearly betrayed that his conscience was burthened with even more than the making up of his own dreadful account.

Doctor Prior, in the true spirit of his calling, was endeavouring to calm his mind, and bring it into a state to benefit by religious consolations, when Almeria frantically rushed into the room, in defiance of all Mrs. Prior's attempts to keep her back : her ungovernable grief soon made manifest all that was before suspected.

She was with much difficulty induced to leave the apartment, where her appearance had considerably increased the dangerous symptoms of the patient. The good doctor used all his rhetoric to urge Arundel to the only reparation in his power, by an immediate union with the hapless girl ; the necessary means were instantly resorted to, and the wretched man had at least one load less upon his guilty mind, in the reflection that his child would not come into the world with disgrace attached to its name.

Almeria at that time cared little about herself, one way or other ; her faculties were all absorbed in grief. Arundel did

not survive their marriage many days, and the shock of his death accelerated the birth of the child ; but it was not till the little Agatha was some weeks old, that the joint endeavours of the worthy couple who had taken her under their roof, could bring Almeria to a just sense of her own misconduct. When at length, however, her eyes were opened to it, she felt the disgrace so strongly, that she voluntarily inflicted upon herself the atoning penance of letting the stigma rest upon her during life, by leaving her family in ignorance of her actual marriage, and concealing herself wholly from them. Doctor Prior remonstrated in the most forcible manner against this concealment, but in vain ; she was inflexible from the fear, as she told Sir Edward, that her child would be taken from her ; and the good man knowing nothing of either of the families, could devise no mode of counteracting her determination.

A longer continuance of his paternal-

admonitions, might possibly have brought her to a more proper sense of what she owed to her family ; but in the dread of being discovered, she became impatient for removal to some place of greater privacy, and fixed upon Wales. Finding he could not dissuade her from her purpose, he kindly recommended her to the care and attentions of a married sister, in the vale of Festiniog. Here she gave herself up to a state of despondency, from which she was never drawn, but by the caresses of her infant ; she continued however to drag on her miserable existence for more years than could have been expected, considering the wretched state of her health ever since its birth.

Whether the various conferences with Sir Edward Arundel, however consoling, might not from their agitating nature have hastened the period of her fate, there is no saying ; but on the very morning he had fixed for his departure she expired. He now of course delayed it till he could

see proper care taken of her remains ; and sent off the little Agatha with her maid a day's journey on the road, to await his joining them. The child's legitimate claim to the name of Arundel, having at once removed all the difficulty of her introduction into Mrs. Delmere's family.

Colonel Delmere's ignorance of the actual marriage arose from his brother's having been immediately taken to his friend's house at some distance from the parsonage ; and the daily inquiries being confined to the state of Arundel's wound, the whole matrimonial transaction had been kept as secret as was at the time intended : and when the emigré family to whom Almeria had first gone, were applied to for information, they indignantly disclaimed all farther knowledge of her, having quarrelled with their relation for the deceit put upon them ; who, on her part, had disappeared from the moment of the discovery.

CHAP. V.

SIR Edward made no unnecessary delays in proceeding with his little charge into Hampshire ; and having deposited her in the inn at his last stage, he proceeded alone to Hurstbourne, having settled it in his own mind that a woman of true feeling was such a phenomenon, she deserved the consideration of being spared from the effects of sudden surprise.

He imparted, with a little well-judged circumlocution, the result of his journey.

The circumstance of the marriage was so much beyond Sophia's hopes, and

smoothed down so many difficulties, as to awaken a sense of more genuine satisfaction than she had experienced since her loss; and a sweet, expressive, though melancholy smile accompanied her acknowledgment for the trouble he had taken.

This smile strangely affected him.

The respect with which she had inspired him in the former visits had overcome his repugnance to her society; he was inclined to consider her as a being wholly distinct from the sex he had fore-sworn. She was his friend's disconsolate relict—renouncing the world for his sake—careless of her claims to admiration—alive only to grief and to benevolence.—What beauty of intellect had he not traced in those woe-worn features!—and whilst he fixed his eyes upon them during his narrative, a thought had crossed his mind, whether smiles could ever have become them half so well!—The smile therefore which now broke through her

downcast pensive expression, as she raised her head to speak, took him so unawares that it altogether disconcerted him—he remained a moment at a loss for what he was going to say.

Sophia had not lifted her eyes to his face, and he recovered his self-possession. He went on to inform her of Almeria's death—she interrupted him in eager solicitude for the child. "She wished not to lose an instant in sending a trusty person for her."

He had real pleasure in telling her the child was already within reach.

Sophia now gave him a look of gratitude and pleased surprise. This was the first time her eyes had rested upon his countenance—it bespoke so much soul, as to set her immediately at ease, under the sense of obligation.

He begged leave to go for his little charge, and to be allowed to deposit her himself in the hands of her aunt. After all the trouble he had taken, there was

no refusing what he seemed to request as a gratification.

During his absence, Sophia, imparted at the Priory what had occurred. There remained no call for device or concealment. Almeria Delmere had been clandestinely married to Mr. Francis Arundel, who lost his life in a duel; the family had never forgiven her; she had languished in ill health and retirement ever since, and was lately dead, leaving an unprotected orphan, which Sophia meant to adopt.

This was told and publicly repeated. But to her father and mother, Henry and Emily, she accounted for the secrecy so strictly enjoined, by Colonel Delmere's ignorance of the marriage ceremony having actually taken place.

Sophia's thoughts were now for the first time again necessarily drawn into worldly concerns; it occurred to her, that Sir Edward's return would be at the dinner hour, and that she could not well

avoid asking him ; she therefore appointed Henry to do the honours of her table to him ; and next came the consideration how best to accommodate Agatha and her maid in the cottage.

All this was too new not to be attended with a little hurry of spirits, which made her more than usually susceptible of inconvenience, from the heat of the weather. " Do put this cap rather more off my face, Victoire," she said, as her maid set about dressing her ; " it heats me so intolerably." The usual period of weeds had long been past, but she had pertinaciously adhered to the close cap.

" *Ah ! le ciel en soit loué !*" exclaimed Victoire, and she contrived to pull forward a little hair as she adjusted the cap ; not being able, however, to please herself in putting it on in a way so different from that for which it was intended, she held the looking-glass for her lady's opinion. " Madame must look handsome any way," she said ; " but this cap will disgrace my *savoir-faire*."

"I can't possibly care about it, so I does but feel more comfortable," Sophia replied, declining to look.

"Can I fall upon no means of attracting your eye to the glass, without betraying my purpose!" exclaimed Victoire; "I really did wish that you should observe the alteration in your looks before it alarms your friends."

"Am I really so much altered?"

"Indeed I can't help thinking so."

"Let me see the glass then?"

Victoire handed the glass to her—the wily waiting-woman had gained her point; Sophia was not very alarmingly altered, but she had always been an elegant dresser, and the cap as it was now put on looked so insufferably awkward, that it offended her eye.

"I see no particular alteration in my looks; but you certainly have made an intolerable fright of my head, Victoire—put me on the mob you have been wanting me to wear."

Victoire was triumphant, and the instant she had finished her lady's toilette, flew to the Priory to impart the glad tidings.

Katty exulted in the success of her interference taking the conquest over the close cap wholly to herself, and thence proceeded to anticipate such wonderful results as certainly were not very obvious to those more prone to combine probability with their conjectures.

Agatha Arundel's first appearance at the cottage was not prepossessing; tall for her age, and awkwardly dressed—shy—frightened—clinging close to the maid; her head hanging down, sucking her own thumb, and scowling from under her dark locks at Sophia and Henry, (who had come at his sister's bidding to receive Sir Edward). Every word addressed to her, instead of producing an answer, made her draw a little farther back till she got quite behind Winny, who on her part, by way of encouragement, went on saying, "Oh fie! missy tear! how can you pe-

have so pat? 'tis shame! look up and speak, if not your aunt will whip—I must call plack man take you away.”

At every fresh threat the poor child's terror increased, till she at length burst into a violent passion of tears, hiding her face in Winny's petticoat.

“There are no black men to frighten children in this country,” said Henry; “take her into the garden to see the flowers, and let her feed the ducks and chickens with this bit of bread; she will soon see there is nobody here that will hurt her.”

Winny obeyed.

“Rather an inauspicious beginning!” said Henry, looking after them.

Sophia, though much overcome by the scene, replied, “Poor thing! spoilt by her mother, I dare say, and mis-managed by her maid; I must expect to have some trouble with her; but I could perceive an intelligent eye through her scowl, and if her temper be not injured, she will

soon do very well. I have nothing now to draw off my attention from her."

Dinner passed satisfactorily enough, though Sophia's spirits were evidently hurried; but she forced herself to converse, and every word she uttered heightened Sir Edward's opinion of her understanding. The appearance of coffee put him in mind that his visit drew towards a close; he hastily turned his thoughts to the possibility of striking out some mode of making himself farther useful with respect to his young cousin; and it luckily occurred to him, that it would now be necessary to inform his uncle of the existence of this grandchild; "which with Mrs. Delmere's permission he would take upon himself, and acquaint her with the result."

This could admit of no objection, and Sir Edward took his leave.

Sophia then made another attempt to draw her little charge into talk, but it would not yet do—so she gave up the

point, leaving her to the salutary effects of a night's rest, and greater familiarity with the animals and objects about her.

The report Henry had to make at the Priory, of Agatha's introduction, created some alarm for the task Sophia had undertaken ; but Katty made very light of the matter indeed.

"If my niece Delmere will but be guided by me," she said, "I'll answer for her being soon got into order—nothing can be so easy—her mother has been too sparing of the rod, that's all ; and when once she becomes sufficiently acquainted with old father birch, my niece's spirits need not be worn to death with teaching her, for I can undertake her catechism, and Mamosel may instruct her in French grammar, and all the rest will follow of course."

This easy mode of settling the affair, was only answered by a good-humoured smile, which Katty pleased herself by

construing into a smile of approbation, and there it ended.

The next morning proved of better promise, with respect to Agatha. Winny having been instructed to refrain from threats, had recourse to her usual alternative, a bribe; strawberries and milk appeared upon her aunt's breakfast table, and the sight of them lightened up the little girl's countenance, to an expression that convinced Sophia there was at least no deficiency of intelligence in her. A few words of gentle kindness soon brought her to agree to let Winny go to her own breakfast, and remain alone with her aunt; and as long as the strawberries lasted, all went on well; but the instant she had made an end of them, she became importunate for Winny to take her back to her mamma.

The task of informing the child of her mother's death, had been purposely reserved for Mrs. Delmere, who chose to delay it for some days.

“Do you love your mamma very much?”

“Yes.”

“When you were at home, did you like better to stay with her, than with Winny?”

“I like to stay with mamma and with Winny, and I want to go to mamma now.”

“Well, but let Winny finish her breakfast first ; she don’t eat so quick as you do ; and let us talk a little more about mamma ; was she not very sick when you left her ?”

“Yes.”

“And could she let you play about and make a noise when she was sick ?”

“No ; I always go to Winny to play with me—but I like mamma to kiss and coax me, and tell Winny to give me cake and plums.”

“Now if Winny stays and plays with you here, and takes you to gather currants

in my garden, won't you like to stay with me till mamma gets better?"

"Will she let me make a noise then, and not be angry, when she is quite well?"

"When people are quite well they don't so much mind noise."

"Are you quite well? and will you let me make a noise?"

"Yes, when I can't find any better way to please you."

"Then I'll stay here, for I do like to make a noise, and I want to go and see if Winny has done breakfast."

"You shall presently—look here, do you know what bird this is?" opening a volume of Bewick.

This attracted and kept her quiet a little longer; her aunt then thinking she had gained as much ground as could be expected at first, gave way to her reiterated demand of going to her maid.

This little specimen will suffice to show, that Sophia was at home in the manage-

ment of children. Exertion of every kind was, however, so new to her, that she somewhat distrusted her own perseverance ; but knowing she had help at hand at the Priory, set her mind at ease, nor was it long ere she became sensible of the power of useful occupation to subdue grief. This was matter of surprise : she had expected, in taking charge of Agatha, to experience a constant struggle between her feelings and her duty, wholly unconscious of the invigorating support ever arising from an active and well directed pursuit.

Grief certainly did not fail to recover its hold, when she sat listlessly down to give way to it ; but intervals of inaction can neither be long nor frequent with those who have the education of a child at heart ; and after a time, Sophia could not but acknowledge to herself, that instead of grief intruding upon her every thought, she not unfrequently had almost to look for it. There however it was —

deep-rooted in her heart's core—the image of her Delmere, never to be obliterated ; but now softened into a soothing melancholy, which admitted of intercourse with her own family, and might be cherished there ; but to the domestic circle she resolutely insisted upon confining herself—not even the Belmonts could obtain an exemption.

Agatha's strong family likeness to Delmere, quickly ripened Sophia's goodwill into extreme affection for her ; and a very few days had been sufficient to reconcile the child perfectly to her new situation, and set her thoughts so completely at rest, with regard to her mother, as to remove all difficulty in the communication of her death, upon which she had quietly observed, “ Well, if you say dear mamma is gone to be happy, so is Aggy too, with dear aunty ! ” A little more sensibility might have pleased dear aunty better, but at that joyous age, present pleasure is all in all.

CHAP. VI.

It cannot be expected, that Sir Edward Arundel's visits, so repeated, and wholly confined to the cottage, should escape the observation of the neighbourhood; in Katty's daily intercourse with the village, she was assailed on all hands upon the subject. She "wished people would be satisfied to mind their own business." "She did not know what concern anybody had with, who visited at the cottage, or for what purpose!"

This made the matter very clear. Mrs. Katharine Villars herself did not attempt to deny it, so there could be no doubt

but the marriage was to take place—and when Agatha appeared by the name of Arundel, the thing was beyond all dispute. “Madam Delmere was already taking charge of Sir Edward’s natural daughter.”

How all this was canvassed and commented on, may so readily be imagined as to make it not worth detailing; the only remarkable circumstance was the dead silence of the communicative Katty, upon the subject at the Priory; but this was the result of mature deliberation. She well knew that if these reports should reach Sophia, or even the Priory, there would be an end of the whole affair, and all her anticipations and prognostications would be knocked on the head at once: so she very judiciously put a seal upon her own lips; but recollecting, at the same time, that servants might betray what she wished concealed, she thought it would be well to put them on their guard also. So she told them, “If they

should hear any idle reports in the village, about Sir Edward Arundel and Mrs. Delmere, not to take any notice of it to the family; as it would vex Mrs. Delmere to have the thing talked of, when she was but just leaving off her weeds."

The servants delighted to be thus entrusted, as they considered it, with the secret, were faithful to the injunction of silence to the heads of the family, and contented themselves with settling the how, and the when, amongst one another.

At Belmont Park, however, no such discretion was enjoined; the house-keeper first brought the news from the village to Laura's maid, who lost no time in imparting it to her lady, as she was dressing her; and Laura went full of it into the drawing room, where she found her father and brother.

"Here's news!" she exclaimed, "who could have thought that this eternal affliction of Mrs. Delmere's—this unheard of woe!—these desperate resolves

of never-ending seclusion, should all have evaporated and 'made themselves air,' upon the very first appearance of a smart man!"

"What can you mean, Laura?" asked her brother.

"The disconsolate of the cottage! going to be married to Sir Edward Arundel, that's all!"

"Impossible!" cried Charles.

"Stavely had it from one of the Priory servants, or I should not give credit to it myself," she replied.

"Surely, Laura, it cannot be true!" said Charles.

"Where is the wonder pray?—in female instability?" Lord Belmont drily asked.

"It cannot be true!" reiterated Charles: "besides, you know Sir Edward's repugnance to female society, on the other hand, my Lord!" turning to his father.

"You are very young indeed, my dear

Charles, for a man of five-and-twenty!" was the reply.

"Is it being very young to expect people to act consistently?"

"Very!—when it is contrary to their interest, or their inclination."

"That would go near to banish consistency from the world, I think."

"And when you have lived as long in the world as I have done, you will cease to look for it," Lord Belmont coolly said.

Warm-hearted and unsuspecting himself, Charles was frequently distressed at the cold selfish system and opinions of a thorough-paced time-server, such as his father had become; for in early life Lord Belmont too had thought and felt as unperverted youth is prone to do; but disappointments of various kinds had made him cynical. One friend of his early days had robbed him of his mistress; another had, before he came to his title, by misrepresentation, jostled him

out of his seat in Parliament ; a third had plundered him at play when flushed with wine : and instead of ascribing these misfortunes to their true cause, his own choice of unprincipled companions, he hardened his mind into a disbelief of all virtue and disinterestedness.

The title and estate which had devolved to him from an uncle, was clogged with the condition of his marrying his cousin, in failure of which he was to forfeit all the unentailed part of the property ; but the condition was no sort of distress to him ; he conformed to it with the same indifference, as if so much live stock had been annexed to the estate. And Lady Belmont, on her part, had given him her hand with all the readiness and regard to propriety with which she would have given it to any other peer her father might have seen fit to select. Of her ladyship, there is little more to be said, than that she was born and bred a woman of fashion, and secured by nature

from those dangerous appendages, beauty and talent ; of course she thought ‘ as all the world thinks,’ and acted ‘ as all the world acts ;’ and in return for this unqualified conformity to its laws and opinions, ‘ all the world’ was unanimous in deeming her an extremely correct and well-bred woman.

With parents such as these, it was rather matter of wonder, that Charles Belmont should retain so much soul, than that Laura should be found wanting ; for although the guileless Emily took her for what she professed herself, and believed in her friendship, she was in fact ‘ far other than her seeming.’ There was a considerable difference of years between her and her brother ; she was, as Texier, in his inimitable readings, described Cidalise, ‘ *Une jeune demoiselle de dix-huit à trente cinq ans,*’ who would have been modestly inclined to rate her claim low in that scale, but for a certain wicked book of reference which cruelly deprives

the female nobility of a privilege the (in this one instance at least) *happier* plebeians so freely indulge in ; that of remaining awhile stationary at the age that best suits their fancy. But if Laura could not arrest the progress of time, she was wondrous expert at obliterating the print of his foot : an adept in the most recondite mysteries of the toilet, with merely a good figure, and a very moderate share of beauty, she had succeeded in establishing herself a distinguished belle ; and continued a blooming perennial, amid the succession of annual beauties that live their little day, and fade from notice. Her manners varied with her society ; attractive or insolent, as might suit the occasion : at the Priory, all conformity and sweetness : her object of course was Henry—not merely from her insatiable avidity for conquest, but with calculating prudence to ensure a *corps de reserve*. Having learnt from sad experience, that

“ ‘Tis not in mortals to command success,”

she judged it expedient to guard against the last melancholy result of continued failure in her more aspiring aims, by having this snug resource to fly to at her utmost need.

A pic nic fête champêtre had been proposed by a neighbouring family, in which the Belmonts and the Villars's agreed to join. It was settled that the young people should ride; Emily's horse having fallen lame, Charles Belmont prevailed upon her to mount a mare of his that was remarkably quiet. The party set out in high spirits; one of the servants, who went forward to open a gate, rode a mettlesome animal, which became unruly at his companion's passing him; the gate slipped from the man's hand at the moment Emily was going through it, and fell against her mare, who in her fright set forth at full speed, and all Emily's efforts to check her proved in-

effectual ; Charles aware of her danger, leaped a gate, and reached the spot he saw the mare making for, just in time to turn her into the hedge, by which he succeeded in stopping her, but the sudden jirk threw Emily off.

She was stunned, but not hurt, and wished to make light of her fall, but the tremour and agitation of Charles exceeded all bounds, and betrayed feelings of which he had hitherto scarce himself suspected the extent—they did not escape Emily's notice ; the other gentlemen of the party were importunate for her remounting immediately, asserting that she would never recover courage to get on a horse's back again, if she did not ; but Charles vehemently opposed it ; denouncing vengeance against the poor animal, and insisted upon taking Emily into a farm-house close by, to recover from her fright, and await the coming up of the barouche, which was

only occupied by Lady Belmont and Katty.

Emily was in fact very little frightened, but finding that Charles was determined to transfer all his own terrors to her, she hoped by acquiescence to ward off the observation of her companions; so she suffered him to lead her into the house, urging him at the same time to remount his own horse, and proceed with the rest—but in vain; he would not stir till he had seen her safely deposited in the barouche. The other equestrians being satisfied that she was unhurt, and in good hands, now gave the reins to their steeds, and were soon out of sight.

The time that elapsed before the arrival of the barouche was not unprofitably spent by Charles. The farmer's wife had shown her guests into a parlour, and busied herself in collecting every restorative she could think of for Emily, and, indeed, for her companion,

been checked by Sophia's wish for retirement ; but Emily unconsciously betrayed such solicitude for promoting the acquaintance between her and the Belmonts, as soon opened her sister's eyes to the motive, and she gave way to meeting them at the Priory with as good a grace as she was able.

Agatha was now become the plaything and amusement of the Priory, as well as the occupation of the cottage. The occupation had its difficulties, which Mrs. Delmere took the most judicious modes of overcoming. The child was intelligent and affectionate in an uncommon degree ; but she was also violent and refractory. The grand impediment to rapid improvement lay with Winny, " Cot pless hur soul, hur was not of marple, to hear her poor little tear missy cry so long and hart—preak a plood fessel may pe and tie !—no inteet, Matam Telmere's must not expect hur can to so !" Of course, whilst Agatha was aware of the

power of her tears over her maid, she was not sparing of them. Affection and kindness were, however, gradually working their way, when a sad check to the progress came from an unlooked-for quarter.

CHAP. VII.

WHEN Sir Edward Arundel went to inform his uncle of the existence of a grandchild, he found him in great affliction for his only remaining son, who had been seized with a putrid fever, and given over by the physicians.

He died—and when the first paroxysm of grief had subsided, Mr. Arundel's thoughts naturally reverted to Agatha, whom he now determined to make heiress to his large property. “She is all that I have left,” he said; “and it will be an object of great interest to me, to have her educated under my own eye ;

you, my dear Sir Edward, I know to be possessed of too much liberality to grudge this preference of my grand-daughter to your hereditary claims."

This was but doing justice to Sir Edward's disinterestedness; he highly applauded the intention, but anxiously sought to prevail upon his uncle to leave the child under Mrs. Delmere's care, and pointed out the obvious advantages of it with much energy. Mr. Arundel, however, adhered tenaciously to the idea of having her educated under his own eye; it would be both a consolation and an amusement to him, and there could be no difficulty in meeting with some proper person to take charge of her, when she was a little older; meanwhile Mrs. Arundel (a widowed relative, who had the care of his family) would see to all that was necessary for the present.

Sir Edward could obtain no mitigation of this decree. He foresaw Mrs. Delmere's resistance to it, and sought to

store his mind with all the persuasive arguments he could devise, to conquer her reluctance, and soften her sense of the sacrifice she was called upon to make to Agatha's ultimate advantage. This he satisfied himself could be better effected in person than by letter;—so he again repaired to his inn, at Hurstbourne, whence he dispatched a messenger to request admittance at the cottage, trusting that, although this might savour a little of formality, it would secure him from the danger of encountering any other female, than her who had now become an exception to his prejudice against the sex.

His note followed Sophia to the Priory, whither she had just walked over with her little charge.

“Will you take care of Agatha for an hour, aunt Katharine?” she said, after reading the note. “I am wanted at the cottage.”

“Don't let it be longer, my dear, for

"I have a thousand things to do," replied the ever busy Katty.

"I will send Winny for her, if I do not return myself by that time," was the answer.

Sir Edward Arundel's communication was extremely distressing to Sophia ; and the circumstance of his uncle's intention to make Agatha his heir, on which he had chiefly relied for reconciling her to the separation, did but increase her unwillingness to part with her. "You could not have offered an argument less calculated to remove my objection, than her being threatened with becoming an heiress," she said.

"Threatened!?" Sir Edward exclaimed with much surprise: "forgive the repetition of your word; but you spoke it with an emphasis, which I own astonishes me."

"Your astonishment will surely cease, if you reflect for a moment, how greatly the chances against a girl's marrying

happily, are increased by her being made an object to the rapacity which pervades every rank of life. What is to convince her that she is sought for those qualities which ensure conjugal felicity, and without that—" Poor Sophia's countenance clouded over, and she was unable to proceed.

Sir Edward, without seeming to observe it, playfully replied, " Consummate beauty might be objected to, on the same grounds ; but we should not readily find a young lady willing to forego the dangerous possession, and submit to a little intentional disfigurement."

With recovered self-possession, she replied, " But will you not allow that we might find many a married one ready to agree with me, that beauty or fortune had proved the bane of her happiness? I grant you, however, that it is not the experience of others that would be likely to induce a young woman to renounce either advantage, particularly in the pre-

sent mode of education.—You look surprised !”

“ I confess it is new to me to hear such an opinion seriously advanced.”

“ I have known it acted upon,” Sophia replied. “ A friend of my own had but one child, and it was a daughter ; she used all her influence with her husband to obtain his concurrence in letting the world understand, that he favoured the idea of male succession so much, as to intend her no larger a fortune than if she had had brothers. Under this impression she was sought and won by a man of fortune so inferior, and delicacy so great, as would have effectually precluded him from urging his suit, had he conceived her to be an heiress : he is possessed of every estimable and every amiable quality, and they are eminently happy ; but it was almost laughable to hear of the difficulties he raised against owing his affluence to his wife, when he discovered he had been cheated into marrying an heiress ; he did,

however, at length submit to be made rich, and she ‘bears her faculties so meekly,’ as to spare his pride all the mortifications he had anticipated.”

“There is no contending against a fact, nor shall I deny that a large fortune may cast a doubtful shade over the disinterestedness of a lover; but until we can new model our generation, we must expect to pass for singular, at least, in holding such advantages cheap.”

“At the hazard of even passing for romantic, I must adhere to it. I can adduce another case in point, where the loss of the fortune has produced the happiness its possession would have impeded; a son was born at the end of sixteen years, during which a poor girl had been considered as sole heiress to a large estate; a suitor to whom she had, in obedience to her parents, though much against her own inclination, agreed to give her hand, immediately drew back. She was suffered to marry the man of her

choice, and their felicity is unclouded. What must it have been with the mercenary wretch, to whom she was so nearly sacrificed? Many a woman has also remained single all her life from being impressed with the idea that her fortune was the chief attraction."

"I perceive I have no chance of bringing you to consider my uncle's intentions towards Agatha, as any compensation for parting with her; but shall you think it right to risk changing them, by the refusal to give her up? He is, I am obliged to confess, both captious and whimsical."

"Whatever my view of the subject may be, I am clear I should not be justified in acting upon it; a grandfather's right must supersede mine; but if you could obtain a compromise, I might still hope to avert some of the mischief I foresee from this change in poor Agatha's prospect."

"Command my utmost exertion in

any thing that may relieve your solicitude for her."

"If she might be entrusted to me for half the year—when he goes up to attend parliament—he would not, during his stay in London, miss the amusement he expects her to be to him; and, oh! how much more than amusement she would be to me!"

"And of what inestimable importance to the poor child!" exclaimed Sir Edward.

Just at this instant the door was suddenly opened, and Katty put in her head to say, "I really couldn't wait for Winny any longer, and my brother wouldn't be troubled with her noise, and nobody else was in the way, so I have brought her."

"O law! Sir Edward Arundel!" interrupted Agatha, as she skipped into the room.

"Sir Edward Arundel!" repeated Katty, in the utmost surprise.

As she held the door in her hand, it

had screened Sir Edward from her sight, he having retreated to the wall in dismay at the sound of another female voice, whilst Sophia coloured from confusion at having forgotten to send for the child, according to her promise. These little circumstances went to the strengthening of Katty's hopes, at the same time that she felt rather disconcerted at her own mal-a-propos intrusion; and she was on the point of again shutting the door and running off, when she recollected that this would be the height of incivility: so then bustling forward, she reiterated—

“ Sir Edward Arundel! why, dear me, niece Delmere! why didn't you tell me who it was that sent for you? I am sure I should never have thought of such a thing, as breaking in upon your secret conferences in this manner.—However, as it has so happened, I am extremely glad, sir, to have the pleasure of seeing you—and I hope we shall be better acquainted, and that you will not suspect my having

any intentions of prying into my niece's conduct.—”

“ My dear aunt !” cried Sophia, breaking into this foolish speech, “ depend upon it one look of your countenance will always suffice to exonerate you from unkind intention of any sort.—Give me leave, Sir Edward, to make you acquainted with Mrs. Katharine Villars, a favourite aunt with all of us, whose good-nature we are apt to trespass upon, from finding it inexhaustible. I beg your pardon, indeed, for neglecting to send for Agatha !”

This was uttered with a look and a smile that Sir Edward thought might have become an angel.

“ Well, my dear, she will perhaps be in your way now,” said Katty, with a significant look ; “ shall I take her with me to old Nanny’s ?”

“ No, I choose to stay here,” cried Agatha ; “ I’m never in aunt Delmere’s way when I’m quiet, am I, aunty ?”

“ You may amuse yourself with looking over the prints in that book yonder,” said Sophia, “ if you have had as much walking as you wish.”

“ I could walk a good deal more—and I like to go to old Nanny, because she’s so funny ; but I always like best to stay with you, when I may, aunty !”

Sophia’s eyes filled.

Sir Edward had no idea there had been so much heart in the little girl—he felt pleased with her ; and upon reflection he did not regret the intrusion of Mrs. Katharine : the circumstance had shown Mrs. Delmere in a new light ; with what sweetness she had warded off the continuation of her nonsensical harangue !—

The subject under consideration was carried on in a way not likely to attract the child’s attention. It was finally settled that Sir Edward should use his utmost influence with Mr. Arundel in favour of Sophia’s proposal ; and then,

having bestowed as much time as he decently could upon the sandwiches, he took his leave, with a feeling something bordering on mortification for not being detained to dinner.

“What makes Sir Edward Arundel look so, when he speaks to you, aunty?” said Agatha, the moment the door was closed after him.

“Look how, my dear?”

“I don’t know—so good-natured I mean.”

“Does he not always look good-natured?”

“No, indeed!—he always looked cross at me, and at Winny—and his voice was like being angry; but he makes it so good-natured like when he speaks to you.”

Sophia’s mind was engrossed by the subject she had been canvassing, and she paid no attention to the child’s remark.

Not so aunt Katty—she treasured it in her heart of hearts when Agatha repeated it to her; nothing could be more promising! but she deemed it prudent to caution the little girl against the mischief she might inadvertently do; so she told her, “Little girls should never look at gentlemen.”

“Why not?”

“Because gentlemen don’t like to be observed upon when they are in company with ladies.”

“What is ‘observed upon?’”

“Taking notice of what they say and do.”

“What would Sir Edward do to me?”

“He would be very angry with you.”

“But I don’t care for his being angry, for I don’t love him one bit.”

“But aunt Delmere would be angry with you.”

“Would she?—Is she a lady?” Aga-

tha's idea of ladies was confined to the visitors she saw at the Priory.

"To be sure, child! what a foolish question!"

"Then mustn't I mind Sir Edward Arundel at all when he visits aunty?"

"No;—don't trouble your head about any thing he says or does, but amuse yourself with your playthings."

"Well then, so I will," replied Agatha.

Laura had not been remiss in endeavours to ascertain the truth of the reports that prevailed in the village, for Sir Edward was an object of no slight interest; and Emily perfectly satisfied her, by explaining the nature of his visits. Charles Belmont had never given any credit to the story; and Lord Belmont conceived it to be immaterial, as not likely to affect Sir Edward's political conduct one way or other; so the matter was pretty much at rest with the family

at the Park, and neither hint nor inuendo from any of them, had given the slightest alarm at the Priory; where Sophia's continued depression, when not called upon for particular exertions, had likewise contributed to avert every idea of the kind.

CHAP. VIII.

SIR Edward found himself irresistibly impelled to be a very active agent in the negociation he had undertaken. No wonder ! Mrs. Delmere, although a woman, was formed, it must be acknowledged, to excite feelings of interest and esteem, in every thinking mind ! possibly, indeed, her being the relict of his friend might bias his judgment—at any rate it assuredly entitled her to be served with zeal—he should not be much surprised to discover very exalted sentiments in her—in fact friendship was wholly independent of sex—why should not good

sense and a cultivated mind receive the tribute due to them, though they had the misfortune of being decked in female attire ! He had once valued himself upon his skill in physiognomy—this Miss Vyner had caused him to forswear ; and yet it now again forced itself upon him—there was no mistaking the expression of Mrs. Delmere's countenance—so open—so candid—so intelligent. Delmers he recollected used to rave of her beauty—her features might be faultless—he had paid no particular attention to them—friendship had nothing to do with beauty of person—though certainly the eye even of a friend, rests with more pleasure upon an agreeable face, than upon a plain one !—

In cogitations such as these, he reached Rock Castle.

It was a matter of no small difficulty to bring Mr. Arundel to give the slightest consideration to Mrs. Delmere's proposal. Having been many years a widower, he had acquired all the selfish habits of an

old bachelor, and expected indulgence in all his whims ; he looked for amusement from the child's playfulness ; and when told of her hitherto neglected education, and the improvement already visible from Mrs. Delmere's judicious management, he laughed at the idea of beginning to educate at such early years, adding, "And you, Ned, of all people in the world, setting forth the pre-eminence of any one woman, who have been taught a lesson that might have pretty well settled you with regard to the whole sex !"

Finding his uncle not to be moved by this argument, he endeavoured to alarm him by strongly stating the torment a child so sadly spoiled would be to himself ; and the little probability of Mrs. Arundel's being able to manage her.

This so far succeeded as to protract the ultimate decision to the end of a few weeks trial. He would have the child and her maid come to Rock Castle forthwith ; and if it actually appeared that

she was above their hand, he would agree to let her go back, for Mrs. Delmere to make her more tractable, during the winter months, while he was in London.

Not being able to obtain any better terms, Sir Edward was obliged to let the matter rest there for the present, and set forward once more for the Priory cottage.

Vexed and mortified at the ill success of his embassy, it was very natural Sophia should occupy his thoughts during his journey. He had so friendly a sense too of the disappointment she would feel; he had seen how her heart was set upon fulfilling her duty, by all that was left of Delmere—and he so honoured her for it! It likewise occurred to him, (for what will not occur to a mind long turned on one subject?) that he himself must have appeared deficient in testimonies of respect to Delmere's widow!—Having been forced once more into female society, whether he would or no, he foresaw the unfortu-

nate consequence must be an occasional continuance of intercourse, which might eventually throw him into the way of the other women of the family ; and it would be but a proper compliment to request her introduction of him to her mother and sister—and certainly, if they at all resembled her, there was not so much cause to shun them, as he had been inclined to think.—In fact, he could not but acknowledge to himself, that his mind was considerably relieved by being able again to think well of a woman ; and he might possibly have been too severe in his condemnation of the whole sex for the failure of one.

To that one his thoughts now reverted, and he was led to a comparison between her and Mrs. Delmare. He had never been able to consider this so impartially before, and he was free to confess he discovered deficiencies in Miss Vyner, which had not struck him till this moment ; she wanted that dignified simplicity—that

total disregard of admiration, so apparent in Mrs. Delmere ; he recollected traits in Augusta, that might fairly enough have been placed to the account of coquetry, during the height of her pretended attachment, had not love blinded his judgment.—Aye, love was ever delusive!—widely different is the unbiassed clear-sightedness of friendship !

Sir Edward had thought—and canvassed—and argued himself into a very placid state of mind ; and he arrived at the cottage with looks so different from any he had worn in his former visits, as immediately to impress Sophia with the certainty of his having succeeded to her utmost wish.

“ I scarcely need ask what news you bring, Sir Edward ; I read success in your countenance,” she said.

“ I grieve to disappoint you,” he replied ; “ I have not succeeded to the extent of my wishes.

Sophia changed colour. “ Have you

entirely failed?" in a voice of much alarm.

"Not entirely; I have obtained a suspension of the final determination, which is something; but even that is clogged with a condition which I fear will distress you—Agatha and her maid must be sent without delay to Rock Castle; and according as his grandchild pleases him, Mr. Arundel will decide."

"O, Sir Edward! she will be taken from me altogether!—she will be lost!—and so shall I!"

Sir Edward, much affected, endeavoured to convince her of the slight ground there was to apprehend that she could at Rock Castle be under such management as to afford her grandfather the amusement he looked for.

A little recovering, Sophia resumed, "My exclamation may sound both vain and selfish, as if I alone could counteract the mischief to which she has been exposed, and that my own deprivation were

my chief concern—but I mean that from your representation of Mrs. Arundel, she cannot be the person to manage such a child as Agatha ; and my distress is not so much for the loss of my own pleasure in her, as for losing the means of doing the best I can by all that is left of——”

Again tears impeded her utterance ; and the mistaken idea of refraining from speaking of her husband in the first period of grief, when nothing can be an aggravation, made it now almost impossible for her to pronounce his name.

“ I trust to the improbability of Mrs. Arundel’s acquiring any sort of controul over Agatha, for her speedy restoration to the only hands that seem equal to the undertaking.”

“ I should have but little confidence in them, were it not for the assistance of my mother and sister, to which I can upon any emergence have recourse ; for she is by no means a common child, either in mind or disposition.”

“ Will you forgive my breaking for one moment into this interesting subject, with a request for the honour of an introduction to that mother and sister at your leisure ; I am anxious for an opportunity of making my personal apology at the Priory, for the apparent rudeness with which I declined the obliging invitation of Mr. Villars, the first time I was down here.”

“ I shall be very glad to make you acquainted with them ; and perhaps it had better be without loss of time, for I think they were proposing a visit at some distance this morning. I will slip on my pelisse in a minute.”

Meeting Agatha at the door, she sent her into the room to put by her books ; telling her to get ready to go with her and Sir Edward to the Priory.

He kindly took her hand, and asked some question about the books, which she answered, adding, “ Now you look

almost as good-natured at me as you do at aunt Delmere."

"Did I ever look crossly at you, Agatha?" he replied, rather surprised at the observation.

"Yes, that I'm sure you did; that made me tell aunt Katty I didn't love you one bit."

"Well, I'll take care not to look so any more, and then I hope you will love me one bit."

"Nor at Winny neither?"

"Nor at Winny neither."

"O! then I shall love you indeed, and take care not to make you angry."

Mrs. Delmere's return stopped what more might have come out, and they proceeded to the Priory; Agatha running and skipping on before, so as not to impede the continued discussion of the topic uppermost in Sophia's thoughts; and ere they reached the drawing-room window that opened to the lawn, he had

succeeded in raising some hope in her mind, that the visit to Rock Castle might produce the very contrary effect from what she feared.

The introduction of Sir Edward Arundel was a very agreeable circumstance to the whole family, and Mr. Villars made a point of retaining him to dinner; to which he 'nothing loath,' assented. A frank cordiality of manner prevailed at the Priory, which soon set their guest at ease, although in company with two new females.

When the carriage was announced, that was to take Mrs. Villars and Emily to their visit, Henry proposed a walk about the grounds to Sir Edward. At their return they found Mr. Villars deeply engaged with his newspaper—Sophia arranging some specimens in her sister's herbal—and Agatha teaching Doll her letters in a corner of the room.

Sir Edward, after observing upon the

selection of the botanical specimens, addressed some little playful question to Agatha.

No answer.

He repeated his question.

No answer.

"Agatha!" said Sophia, "don't you hear Sir Edward Arundel speaking to you?"

"Yes."

"Then why don't you answer, my dear?"

"Because aunt Katty said I mustn't."

"Impossible! aunt Katty couldn't bid you be rude!"

"But indeed, now aunty, she did tell me never to mind any thing Sir Edward Arundel said or did, when he was with you—and she said he would'nt like it—indeed she did now!"

Sophia, wholly unconscious of Katty's ideas, saw nothing in these words, but some misconception of the child's—but an electrical shock could not have pro-

duced a more instantaneous effect than they had upon Sir Edward. A plot!—a plan!—a perception of female art rushed into his mind, and with it such a recurrence to all his prejudices, as made him wish himself any where but where he had so weakly got himself introduced. A dark cloud overshadowed his brow, and he sat silent and abstracted.

Just at this moment, Katty bustled into the room. “Do give me the aromatic vinegar! quick! quick.”—But her eye now falling upon the visitor, she began an elaborate complimentary speech, which was broken into by Agatha, who running to her, caught hold of both her hands, exclaiming, “Now, aunt Katty!—aunt Delmere won’t believe me!—didn’t you say Sir Edward Arundel would be angry, and aunt Delmere too, if I minded any thing he said or did when he was with her—now wasn’t them your words?”

This abrupt attack quite overset poor Katty, and she stammered out, “Aye!

Sir Edward, or any other gentleman, or lady.”—

“No, no! but you did say Sir Edward—and I said—”

“Well, no matter what you said, Agatha!” interrupted Sophia; her observation awakened by Katty’s evident confusion. “Come hither, we will defer our lecture upon behaviour to some more convenient time—no gentlemen like little girls that are troublesome.”—

There was such perfect unembarrassment and openness in Sophia’s countenance, while saying this, as seemed decidedly to acquit her at least of participating in whatever idea might have taken possession of the rest of the family.—Sir Edward felt more at ease, and determined to abide by his dinner engagement, for his first impulse had been to make some pretence for a sudden retreat.

“Merciful goodness!—and here am I forgetting the poor woman in a fit all this while!” cried Katty, eager to escape,

“ what’s the dose, my dear ?—a spoonful ?”

“ My dear aunt ! you are not going to make her swallow the aromatic vinegar ? you’ll choak her !” cried Sophia.

“ Dear me ! I’m glad you told me, I thought it had been the same as hartshorn, and that sort of thing.”—

“ The hartshorn is on the chimney piece in the next room.” Katty moved off with all speed.

“ I should apprehend full as much danger from the doctor as from the disease, if Mrs. Katharine’s prescriptions pass uncorrected,” said Sir Edward to Henry, trying to recover himself.

“ That apprehension might not be misapplied to higher authorities than aunt Katty’s,” Henry answered with a smile.

“ What has Katty been about now ?” said Mr. Villars, who had been too intent upon Lord W——’s movements, to hear a word of what was passing.

He laughed heartily when told, and

said, "Nothing can be more diverting than the confusion of Katty's brain! Every thing finds its way *pêle-mêle* into it, and issues from it in the same order—it's an inexhaustible fund of amusement! I wouldn't have her set right for the world."

"But, my dear father! what is sport to you, may be death to some of the poor people! If she could but just be restrained from administering her remedies till she consulted you or my mother—" said Sophia.

Mr. Villars had called Sir Edward's attention to the newspaper, while she spoke, and a political disquisition ensued, which superseded all farther concern in Katty's proceedings for the present.

CHAP. IX.

AFTER dinner, Sophia communicated the result of Sir Edward's negociation ; and the time and mode of sending Agatha to Rock Castle was taken into consideration.

"Suppose," said Katty, "I were to take her there! I shouldn't mind the trouble at all; it would be quite a party of pleasure to me; and then I could put them into the right way of managing her, you know."

Sir Edward was somewhat amused with the idea of a meeting between the bustling communicative Katty, and the prim

Mrs. Arundel ; but very loath, under the alarm that had now taken possession of his mind, to promote any unnecessary intercourse, he proposed a trusty servant of his own to attend Agatha and Winny on horseback ; Mrs. Delmere had thought of Victoire ; Mr. Villars suggested his old butler, of whom the child was fond.

During these pro's and con's, Katty finding her services not likely to be accepted in the way she had proposed, forthwith turned her thoughts to making herself useful in another. " Nobody will think of telling the poor little girl of all this !" was her considerate reflection, " and she will be taken by surprise, so I had better prepare her."

And away she went in quest of Agatha ; she found her at high romps with Winny and the old butler.

" Aye, make the most of your time, my love," said Katty, " you'll not be

allowed all these indulgences where you are going."

"Why, where am I going to?"

"To your grand-papa Arundel."

"Indeed, but I shan't do no such thing! I don't care for my grand-papa Arundel."

"Oh fie! it's very naughty indeed, not to care for one's grand-papa!"

"Well, ton't cry missy tear," said Winny, "I will peg Matam Telmere's not let you go."

"Now Winny, how can you be so foolish; I tell you she must go," cried Katty.

"But I won't then!" exclaimed Agatha, passionately.

"Oh fie! fie! little girls that say they won't, must be made to do things!" continued the judicious Katty.

Agatha now worked up to one of her fits of violence, stamped with rage, screaming out, "Nobody can make me!"

"Then I must fetch aunt Delmere to you," said Katty; "you daren't behave so to her!"

“Daren’t I? but you shall see I dare!” cried she; and running away from them, she rushed into the drawing room, vociferating through her tears, “I will not go to grand-papa, aunt Delmere, I will not go away from you!”

“Hush, Agatha!” with great mildness, “you know I never understand you, when you speak and cry at the same time—compose yourself! and when we are alone you shall tell me what you have to say—we must not trouble company with our arguments.”—

“No, but aunt Katty says—”

“You shall tell me that by and bye—and then I have something to tell you, when you are good and quiet again—get out of the window upon the lawn now, and look at that beautiful shrub yonder.”

Agatha went sobbing to the window, and did as her aunt bid her.

“Katty was determined not to be idle,” said Mr. Villars; “she is a rare hand at working up a broil.”

"I had better go and learn from her what has passed," said Mrs. Villars.

"Thank you, dear mother, if you please," returned Sophia; and Mrs. Villars left the room.

"This will require something more of coercion, I presume, than is habitual with you," Sir Edward observed.

"It will require no harsh means," replied Sophia; "affection will do every thing with a disposition like hers."

"But is coaxing a child into good humour, any thing more than a temporary expedient, productive of worse consequences?"

"I have no intention of coaxing her."

"You must not be surprised that a bachelor should have no conception how such matters are managed."

"Bachelors in general cannot much care; but as this poor little girl is going where you have some influence, it may not be useless for you to see how she can be brought round."

Sir Edward, more interested than he was at all aware of, in any thing that concerned his new friend, expressed the wish he strongly felt, that it might enable him to suggest what could prove advantageous to the child.

Agatha had been recovering some composure whilst this was passing ; and Sophia having only waited to hear her mother's report, proposed to Sir Edward to accompany her to the seat under the plane tree ; and taking Agatha by the hand as she went by, led her along with them.

An occasional short sob, showed that all was not yet well within. " Aunt Katty said—" she again began.

Sophia interrupted her ; " you are not yet enough recovered to tell me your story, Agatha ; so you shall first hear mine. You must know that I am going to do something that is very disagreeable to me."

" O dear aunty !—what ?" eagerly.

“Something that I would not do, if I could possibly help it.”

“Who makes you? your papa and mamma?”

“No, ’tis my own will makes me.”

“O dear aunty don’t let it then! my will only makes me do what I like.”

“That’s because you are too young and childish yet, to know what is best for you.”

“How can it be best to do what I don’t like?”

“Do you remember when you had a bad head-ache and stomach-ache last week?”

“Yes.”

“Do you remember that you would not take the physic I had ordered, when Winny carried it to you?”

“Yes, that I do—I threw it at her.”

“Why did you take it afterwards?”

“Because you know, aunty, you said it would make me not have the head-ache and stomach-ache.”

“ And was I right ? ”

“ O yes, aunty, I was well quite soon, for I played at battledore afterwards, and kept it up ever so many.”

“ Then you see I knew what was good for you better than you did.”

“ Yes, to be sure—I know that very well.”

“ And it was because you are yet too young and childish, for your own will to make you do what is best for you.”

“ When I am older and wiser, shall I always do what is best for me ? ”

“ I hope so—if while you are a child you always try to do what those who are older and wiser tell you is right.”

“ But I shan’t never like to do what is disagreeable though.”

“ If you were to be ill again now, and I sent you a dose of physic by Winny, would you throw it at her ? ”

“ No.”

“ Why not ? ”

“ Because it made me well, you know.”

“ Very well—then you see you have already sense enough to take a dose of physic, because you know it is good for you, though it is disagreeable.”

“ Yes, I have sense enough for that,” said Agatha, with some exultation.

“ And if I were to bid you do any thing else you didn’t like, because I knew it was good for you, would you do it ? ”

“ Yes, if you bid me.”

“ Very well, then you would do right—and what happens when you do right ? ”

“ Then you love me a good deal, aunty.”

“ And does that please you ? ”

“ Yes, very much indeed ! because I love you so dearly.”

Poor Sophia’s eyes filled at the warmth with which this was said. “ Now, Agatha,” she continued, “ when you grow up to be a woman like me, you will know of

yourself without any body's telling you, what are the disagreeable things people must do, in order to do right."

"And who loves them for doing right, when they are great big women?"

"All their relations and friends. And now I am going to tell you what the disagreeable thing is, I must be obliged to do, because I know it is right."

"What is it?" very anxiously.

"I shall be obliged, my dear little girl, to let you go away from me for a little while."

"O dear—dear aunty!" and she burst into an agony of tears; "that was what I wanted to tell you, about aunt Katty—but must you indeed let me go?"

"I should not do right if I did not. Your grand-papa Arundel wants very much to see his dear little grand-daughter, and make her love him; and if I were not to let you go, it would make him unhappy—and when you have pleased him by making him a visit, then you may come

back again to me, and you and I shall be all the more happy for having both done what was right."

"O dear aunty!" sobbing; "but I wish grand-papa would come and see me here."

"And so do I — but that can't be."

"And must I go all alone by myself?"

"Winny will go with you."

"But why can't you go too, aunty? O! I shouldn't mind where I went then!"

This was too much for Sophia, after the trying exertion she had made, and her own tears forced their way in spite of her.

Just then, Katty beckoned Agatha to her, from the opposite side of the lawn, calling out at the same time, "We are going to the Pheasantry: ask your aunt to let you come with us."

It was quite a relief at this moment, to send the child from her, and she bid her go. And away skipped Agatha, as if

there had been no dreaded grand-papa in the world.

“Happy age!” said Sophia, as she arose to move towards her father, who had been wheeled out upon the lawn in his Merlin chair, where he was deeply engaged in a financial pamphlet. “Happy age! when grief can so easily give way to the first new object!”

“Alas! I fear the objects that may be presented to her at Rock Castle, will be but little calculated to promote what you have so successfully begun,” said Sir Edward.

Sophia so strongly apprehended this, that she could not answer.

“I am not much accustomed to children,” he went on; “and I confess that I am surprised at the facility with which you succeeded in turning Agatha’s thoughts from her own distress, to a sympathy with yours, and an emulation of your example.”

“She is a child of strong affections and

‘quick parts,” replied Sophia; “and steady, rational, kind treatment will mould her into any thing—the very warmth of her temper may be turned to good account.”

“I cannot but admire,” resumed Sir Edward, “what an adept you are, on a subject so foreign to what I should naturally have supposed your pursuits to be.”

“I am perhaps in this instance more indebted to the experience of others than to my own reflections upon the subject. It has ever been one of deep interest in our family. I had a sister — some years younger than Emily and myself, that—but she was too much of an angel for this world!”

Excessive emotion from a concurrence of painful retrospections, overpowered her already harassed spirits, and checked her utterance.

Sir Edward’s thoughts, as he silently contemplated her, were led back to old Montaigne—and the preference he gives to friendship over love. “*Ces deux sen-*

timens sont bien entrés chez moi en connoissance l'un de l'autre, mais en comparaison jamais ;" he says. "What, indeed, is love compared to the esteem and admiration this woman inspires !"

They were approaching Mr. Villars, who interrupted his revolvings by a sudden exclamation.

"It is impossible things can be suffered to go on so !" looking full at them as he raised his eyes from his pamphlet.

Sir Edward started.

"Specie will be annihilated altogether !" he continued.

Sir Edward smiled at his own alarm.

Mr. Villars entered upon a luminous statement of the increasing mischief of paper currency, &c. &c. in which his auditor entirely concurred, and hoped he should soon have an opportunity of renewing the discussion, being unfortunately, he said, obliged at this moment to take his leave ; which he did very abruptly, from having perceived an addition to the

party that was returning from the Pheasantry.

Something had passed at dinner, respecting an expectation of the Belmonts in the afternoon, which had determined him to make his escape immediately after coffee ; but the interesting scene with Agatha had put it out of his head, and nearly produced the misfortune he most dreaded, that of encountering fashionable females.

While the walking party were advancing, Mr. Villars continued his animadversions to his daughter ; which were, however, interrupted by Mrs. Villars bringing a letter for his approbation, which she had been writing at his desire. Putting it into his hand, she asked, " What have you done with Sir Edward ? is he gone ? "

" Yes ; by the way, what were you and he in such earnest discourse upon, Soph ? "

This question just reached the ear of Katty, as the walkers came up. " Now I hold that to be a very unfair question,

brother," she exclaimed; "don't you, young ladies?—I'm always for old people not prying into the concerns of young ones, when they have a mind to talk apart.—We took the roundabout path to the Pheasantry, you know Emily, on purpose not to interrupt them."

Sophia, who had never yet bestowed a single thought upon what had of late so much engrossed the mind of her aunt, calmly said, "I should have been very unwilling, indeed, to have been interrupted till I had carried my point."

But Emily, perceiving the effect of Katty's speech upon some of the party, subjoined, "I was extremely glad, Sophia, you allowed Sir Edward Arundel to witness your method of bringing little Agg to reason, that he may report it at Rock Castle, provided they have but judgment to follow it up!"

"Aye, but that's the thing not to be expected, you know," resumed Katty; "and that's what made me offer to go,

to put them into the way on't—and I am sure, as I said, I should think it no sort of trouble, for the delight of my life is to be useful."

"Of that we are all aware, dear sister," replied Mrs. Villars; "but there are various considerations to be taken into the account."

"Well, well! so 'tis but settled for the best, I shall be content."

"And you know you are never at a loss for objects to bestow your usefulness upon, Mrs. Katharine," said Laura, with an arch smile.

"Why no, as you say, Miss Belmont," returned Katty, "nobody can accuse me of idleness, and not making the most of time; what is it Mr. Pope the poet says, about time,—you know, Henry?"

"Oh time! than lead more specious!"

"Not Pope!"

"Not lead!"

"Not specious!"

} came from different
voices.

"You see *Gold* is become such an

obsolete commodity, Katt forgets its very name," said Mr. Villars, laughing heartily.

"Ah, well!—gold or lead, no matter which—but I meant about giving it 'a tongue.'"

"Who would have thought of your falling short there, Katt," said Mr. Villars.

"You are always so full of your jokes, brother, you won't help one out; but Henry knows what I mean."

"We take no note of time but from its loss

"To give it then a tongue was wise in man."

Henry repeated.

"Yes, yes, that's it; but that's not all—there's something about lead and gold too, I'm sure."

"O time! than gold more precious—more a load

"Than lead to fools,"

said Emily.

"Aye, that's what I was thinking of—but you see things get jumbled in my head somehow."

“Never mind, Katt; they don’t encumber it long; you jumble them out again with very good effect.”

A discussion now followed of the advantages and disadvantages to arise from Agatha’s change of abode; during which, Sophia, finding herself tired and exhausted, had slipped away, having desired her mother to let Agatha be sent after her to the cottage.

Here, however, she found, instead of rest, fresh and unforeseen cause of disquietude. Mademoiselle Victoire received her with *un air boudeur* so marked as not to be overlooked.

“What is the matter?” said Sophia, “something seems to have disturbed you.”

“Matter enough, indeed!” was the answer; “when I have the misfortune to be so entirely excluded from madame’s confidence, as to be ignorant of what the whole country rings with.”

“What may that be, pray?”

“Madame’s approaching marriage with *Sire Arondel*.”

“My approaching marriage with Sir Edward Arundel!” reiterated Sophia in utter astonishment; “surely, Victoire, you dream! or your ignorance of the language must make you misunderstand.”

“No, no—she could not misunderstand—all the servants—all the people had it from Madame Kattee herself.—She had never been so ill treated before; she defied any of the ladies she had served to convict her of the smallest indiscretion; and she had been entrusted with *des confidences bien autrement importantes* than a simple affair of matrimony.—Madame was the first that ever doubted her fidelity.” Here a plentiful shower of tears heightened the pathos of her oratory.

She might otherwise have gone on much longer, before Sophia had power to stop her, so confounded was she with what she heard—that it should be possible

for her aunt to have taken such a fancy into her head! or if she had—to have communicated it to the servants, was so much beyond all former absurdity, as not to be credited.—At the same time the report, wherever it might originate, was vexatious to a degree that scarcely left Sophia the power of articulating with any sort of calmness—

“ You may rest assured, Victoire, that there is not the slightest foundation for such a report—there must be some unaccountable mistake in regard to my aunt’s giving any sanction to it—and I charge you to contradict it flatly wherever you may hear it.”

Victoire was as much undone to find there was no chance of a wedding, as at having been kept in ignorance of it, “ because, certainly,” she said, “ nothing could so soon console madame for her loss, as *un beau cavalier comme Sire Arondel*.”

Sophia, with marked displeasure, forbade her ever again to speak upon so hateful a subject, and immediately dispatched a messenger for Katty, feeling she could have no peace till she had ascertained what had actually occurred.

CHAP. X.

KATTY obeyed the summons with great alacrity, little suspecting the attack that awaited her. She was at first a good deal confused, but soon rallying, "wondered at the nonsense of people to come teasing her niece with such reports, particularly when she had taken such pains to prevent it."

"But with whom? and in what did the reports originate?" Sophia asked.

"Bless you, my dear! why who can tell? his coming so often, I suppose, and seeing nobody but you."

"But who spoke to you upon the subject, aunt?"

“ Why, dear heart alive ! how can I recollect ?—Every body—the people of the village—and the servants—they were all full of it—but I give you my word, I forbad them all to talk of it, and told them it was as much as their place was worth ; and I made no manner of doubt, they would have kept it all snug among themselves.”

“ But did you not make it clear that there was nothing to keep snug ? that it was all abominable scandal and malice.”

“ Really now, my dear, it would have gone against my conscience to say that, when it was the very thing I was wishing from the bottom of my heart to happen ; but I protest to you I forbad every one of ’em, again and again, to mention it : for, says I, it stands to reason that my niece would be extremely angry to have such a thing get about yet.”

“ Yet ! merciful heaven ! why that was confirming.”

“ Nay, now, niece Delmere ! I must

say this is such an unfair accusation ! can you possibly call it confirming, when I was all the while forbidding them ? but as to telling a falsehood, and saying it's a thing I don't wish, it's what you must excuse me, I never will do, seeing how much I have your happiness at heart."

Sophia had never found it more difficult to command her temper ; she did, however, command it, and only said, " I know how kind your intentions always are, aunt ! but if you would only have warned me—"

" Warned you ! that would have been a good joke indeed ! when it was the very thing I was wanting nobody to do—knowing well enough, that the upshot of that would have been oversetting all my hopes at once !"

" Good heaven ! hopes !—well !" again checking herself ; " we will say no more upon the subject ; it only remains now to consider what may best be done."

" Why, if you'll take my advice, my

dear, the very best that can be done, is just to leave the matter where it is : what need you care what they say ? there's no treason in matrimony ! and you being once again a free woman—”

“ I beg pardon for interrupting you ; but I must entreat to hear no more of this—and request you to give the most unqualified contradiction to every suggestion of the kind, and say that I hold myself degraded by the bare suspicion of such levity.”

“ I'm quite sorry, my dear, to see you in such a taking, and I'll say any thing you please, and tell them all that you know nothing of it's having got about.”

“ My dear aunt Katharine, will you give me leave just to mention the words I wish you to make use of.”

“ To be sure, my dear, if you think I am not to be trusted ; but —”

“ Then only be kind enough to say, Mrs. Delmere would despise herself, if

she could ever think of contracting a second marriage!"

"Well now, I protest you don't know how dangerous it is to make such declarations! I'm sure you must remember poor Mrs. Watson's declaring she never would marry a man that wore a wig or took snuff; and —"

"Once more, forgive my interrupting you! but my head aches so desperately, I must go and lie down."

"Dear dear! how sad! what can have brought it on? shall I sit by you, my dear?"

"By no means, quiet and darkness are my best restorers."

"But really, niece, I don't like to leave you while you are ill—particularly when you are so vexed.—I might think of something to enliven you."

"No, thank you, dear aunt! good night—good night!"

Very reluctantly did Katty repeat the

words, and leave her to her meditations, which were not of a nature to procure her much repose ; and at a very early hour of the following morning she was with her mother.

Mrs. Villars, wholly ignorant of the report, was alarmed at Sophia's agitated appearance—the explanation sufficiently accounted for it. She took ample share in the vexation, but endeavoured to pacify her daughter with the idea that the thing must die away of itself, when there were actually no grounds for it.

“ But, dearest mother, do but consider the humiliation of its reaching Sir Edward's ear. I see only one mode of proceeding for me ; and that is, never more to admit him at the cottage.”

“ Agatha's going to her grandfather,” Mrs. Villars observed, “ will naturally put an end to his visits, and to all farther idea on the subject.”

“ At all events I am determined not to receive him again,” said Sophia ; “ and

now that he has become acquainted here, what further intercourse may be necessary respecting Agatha, can be carried on through you."

Mrs. Villars concurred in this; pleased that Sophia had struck upon any thing to satisfy her delicacy in some degree: though not entirely coinciding in her wish of so completely shutting the door against future contingencies, she judged it best to let matters of this nature take their own course.

When she imparted the circumstance to Mr. Villars, he treated it with great contempt. "Stuff and nonsense!" he cried; "who the devil would mind the gossip of a country village! he thought Soph had had more sense.—For his own part, he wished with all his soul the report were true; Sir Edward appeared to him a perfect gentleman, with a very clear financial head, for he entirely agreed in his view of H—'s pamphlet."

"At any rate," Mrs. Villars resumed,

“ it would not be pleasant to have such a rumour reach Sir Edward as sanctioned by us ; and your sister really seems to have encouraged it. I wish you would enforce the impropriety to her ; she will more readily give way to your admonitions than either to Sophia’s or mine.”

Mr. Villars was sensible of the delicacy, and promised to lecture her ; he accordingly acquitted himself of the task with much earnestness and considerable warmth, but little effect. Poor Katty’s reasoning faculties were of that obtuse description, which completely foils the powers of logic. She ended as she began, by declaring, that “ if she could be allowed to understand her mother tongue, she had made it as clear as so many words could make it, *that it was a subject the family did not choose should be talked of*: and she thought it the hardest thing in the world to have the report laid at her door, when any body might see she had been crying her eyes out all

night with vexation at her niece's suspecting her of it ; but as to making her say it was a thing she did not wish, that was such a falsehood as nothing should induce her to utter —”

She was interrupted with the assurance that her wishes should in no shape be interfered with, provided she kept them to herself ; and all that could finally be obtained was a faithful promise—that she would henceforth hold her tongue upon the subject.

Sir Edward Arundel had left the Priory in a very doubtful frame of mind. He could not satisfy himself, whether he had done right or wrong in getting introduced to the Villars's. He had no great fault to find with any of them ; on the contrary—but there certainly was something very remarkable in what the child had betrayed ; and yet Mrs. Delmere seemed so perfectly unembarrassed by it, that she must stand acquitted of whatever it might mean. Where woman was con-

cerned, however, double dealing might always be apprehended—that he knew but too well!—Delmere's widow though might really be deemed an exception to general rules. What feeling!—what good sense in every word and look!—what happiness might not the friendship of such a woman impart! but to cultivate it was not a thing to be thought of; her family—the world—could not understand it!—Friendship with woman was even a proverbial jest! he should immediately be suspected of what could never again arise in his mind—no—it would never do!—the purity—the delicacy of that sort of attachment was ever misconstrued—in fact, it was evident the aunt was already upon the look out, and there was no knowing how far some others of the family might be so too!—

Mrs. Delmere herself was assuredly as free from such thoughts as he was—her whole soul was engrossed by grief for her husband, and solicitude for Agatha

—not another idea could find place in it—this was her great perfection!—it was here she soared above her sex!—in such a mind as that, to obtain an interest were indeed something!—and might he not in some degree entitle himself to it by vigilant attention to the situation of the child at Rock Castle!—He congratulated himself upon having carried his point in the choice of old Jenkins for her escort—that would ensure him a faithful re-

port of her reception there, which he should have pleasure in imparting. He had for one moment been tempted to offer himself as her conductor, but that might have been misinterpreted!—Yes—he was glad he had resisted that!—On the whole, it would be well to guard against misconstructions, and act as occasion might arise.

At his return home, however, his plans were somewhat disconcerted, by finding old Jenkins laid up with a rheumatic fever, with very little prospect of being

soon able to stir, and Agatha was expected at Rock Castle without delay.

Here was a dilemma!—

To offer himself after all that had just been passing in his mind, was not to be thought of!—the circumstance must, however, be imparted—but how?—opening a correspondence with a woman was an extremely awkward thing!—so much time lost by letters too!—verbal communication greatly preferable—far more expeditious to return to Hurstbourne at once.—He also found his spirits so eminently benefited by all the exercise he had of late been obliged to take in this business—it was clearly every way best.

So back he went—not this time to the inn, but straight to the Priory cottage.

He sent in his request to see Mrs. Delmere on particular business.

Mrs. Delmere was sorry she was so particularly engaged she could not receive Sir Edward; but if he would have the goodness to impart the business,

whatever it might be, to Mrs. Villars, it would be exactly the same thing as to herself.

This message was accurately and distinctly delivered by Victoire in French.

Sir Edward was in no sort of hurry, and would wait Mrs. Delmere's leisure, and do himself the honour, in the meanwhile, to pay his respects at the Priory.

Mrs. Delmere did not expect to be disengaged all day—was the second message Victoire brought.

He hoped she was not ill?

"No, perfectly well," Victoire said.

He left his best compliments, and repaired to the Priory, with a mixture of surprise and displeasure, that was very evident in his appearance, when he made his bow to Mrs. Villars.

He informed her circumstantially of his disappointment at the cottage and reference to her; not without hope of some explanation from her upon the subject; but she simply said, "She was glad

she was at home to receive the communication he had come to make.

With increased dissatisfaction, he imparted his business; and with constrained civility, expressed his wish to know what expedient might now be adopted?

It luckily happened that Mrs. Villars's housekeeper had asked leave to visit her mother in the very part of Herefordshire to which Agatha was going; and this being sufficient protection, settled the affair at once.

When he rose to take his leave, Mrs. Villars invited him to accept of their family dinner, which he coolly declined, and hurried away in a state of considerable discomposure.

His road lay in a contrary direction; but it so happened that his steps mechanically took the Cottage path; and just as he recollected himself, and was turning away from the garden wicket, he saw Katty coming towards it from the

house, and could not well avoid stopping to make a civil inquiry after her health ; which was followed by an expression of regret, at having so unfortunately timed his visit, as to find Mrs. Delmere engaged for the whole day.

“ Why yes,” replied she, with some hesitation, determined to be upon her guard this time : “ Yes—it’s altogether unfortunate enough, to be sure !—but I hope, sir, Mamosel delivered the message very civilly. I was fearful she mightn’t, and wished to have taken it to you myself, but my niece wouldn’t let me.”

“ Perfectly civil—only very disappointing.”

“ O dear !—disappointing !—aye, now that’s just what I thought it would be ; and made me so desirous she should see you, if it had only been—” she stopped short, aware of saying more than she intended.

“ For five minutes,” he said, finishing her sentence for her : “ that was obligingly considerate of you, Mrs. Katharine; but the business that engaged her is so important, as not even to admit of that short interruption.”

“ Business!—bless your heart, no! ’tishn’t business at all.—Dearee me! what am I thinking of!—I beg pardon—yes, yes, it is business—that was the message she sent you, you know.”

“ That was certainly the message delivered, but I perceive a more simple one would have been, that my presence was unacceptable.”

“ My goodness! but you wouldn’t have had her so rude; besides, that’s quite a mistake too; for if it wasn’t for a reason I can’t explain—on account you see of wanting to stop all farther surmises on the subject—”

“ To what subject may you allude, Mrs. Katharine, I don’t understand—”

“ Dear, no, to be sure! I wouldn’t for

the world you should—that's just the thing!—and so I wish you a very good morning, Sir Edward!" breaking away abruptly, lest she should betray more; and leaving him perplexed, bewildered, and very indignant withal, at the inconceivable caprice of Mrs. Delmere.

So he walked away in high dudgeon; and, to complete his discomfiture, as he went along the paling of the Cottage garden, to get back into the road, he caught a glimpse through a break in the laurels of Sophia, sitting upon a bench, with a book in her hand, and Agatha playing at her side.—

He flew off in an absolute rage.

"Oh woman! woman! woman! capricious, inconsistent woman! Fool that I was!—Idiot! to give an instant's credence to friendship with woman!—that I could for one moment expect a solidity in woman, of which so few men are capable!"

Thus he went on, reviling the sex, and abusing his own weak folly, till he was fairly seated in his chaise, on his return to town.

As he came, however, by degrees to think the matter over more coolly, he was not so clear that Mrs. Delmere's conduct quite deserved the stigma his anger had affixed to it. What claim, after all, could he yet lay to her friendship? Engrossed as her mind still evidently was, could it be expected that she should bestow it unsought? Would it have any value if she did?—Her gratitude indeed! Yes—to her gratitude he surely had some claim! he who had abjured the sex! to have encountered what he had done for her sake! common gratitude might have induced her to put herself out of her way for one half hour in return for his having come so many miles—solely upon her business too! Gratitude, however, carried but a cold sound with it! it was cer-

tainly not the feeling to satisfy friendship; and indeed he trusted he was incapable of the meanness of acting with a view to be repaid by gratitude—odious thought!

He then reverted to the foolish aunt;—what might her words mean?—if any thing she said were likely to have a meaning!—it did seem as if her niece's unwillingness to trust her with the message, argued a fear of her betraying something. 'We want to stop all farther surmises,' she said; surmises?—of what?—Could it be, that the busy world ventured to misinterpret?—impossible! the world there knew exactly what their intercourse turned upon:—still there might, to be sure, be prying malicious people!—

In short, he continued soliloquising till he heartily repented his precipitancy in declining the invitation of Mrs. Vilers; and by the time he reached home,

he had made the determination to frame some plausible excuse for a speedy return to the Priory, and endeavour to get to the bottom of the affair.

The day now came that was to take Agatha from her aunt, who found the pain of parting with her far exceeded what she had imagined; she had not believed she could again have been alive to so much grief.

The child too, who had appeared tolerably reconciled to the idea of going, when she actually saw the carriage at the door, resisted entering it with all her might, and it was by main force Winny finally accomplished the matter,

Neither could Sophia look for much comfort from such accounts as Winny was likely to transmit of her charge, her skill in writing amounting to little more than putting a few words together in a way that required some practice to decypher. Her lady had bestowed pains

upon making her copy sentences that might convey useful information, such as ‘Miss Agatha is well,’—‘Miss Agatha is not well,’—‘She is cheerful,’ &c. &c. And this was all the relief to which she could look forward, beside the hope that Agatha might prove too troublesome an inmate to be long suffered at Rock Castle.

But poor Sophia’s ‘occupation was gone,’ and she sunk back into a despondency, and a listlessness, almost equal to what she had experienced in the first months of her widowhood.

Winny had been enjoined to write as soon as she conveniently could; convenience was a term of great latitude with Winny; and so many days had already gone past that, on which Sophia had calculated upon hearing, that she was nearly sick with anxiety and expectation, when a frank of Mr. Arundel’s at length blessed her sight.

The eagerness with which she tore it open could only be equalled by her disappointment, as her eye fell upon the contents.

Winny had never had any concern with letter-writing before, and from her mode of setting about the task, the house-keeper, an elderly good-humoured person, had offered to write it for her; but Winny rejected her assistance with great disdain, saying, "Matam Telmeres had taught her all what was to write in letters, and she could too very well."

Accordingly, with a faithful recollection of her lessons, she wrote as follows:

"Miss Agatha is well—Miss Agatha is not well—Miss Agatha is cheerful—Miss Agatha is out of spirits—Miss Agatha is fatigued—Miss Agatha is not fatigued—we arrived Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday," and so on; to the end of the chapter, not omitting a

single sentence she had learnt, till she had filled the page.

The toss of vexation with which Sophia flung the letter from her, however, brought unexpected comfort; for the wind caught and blew open the paper, and showed some writing on the other side; quickly snatching it up again, she read,

“ Aggy write to dear aunty Delmere myself.—I like grandpapa—Grandpapa says, Aggy may play with Cesar—Cousin Arundel won’t let me touch the things in her room—I don’t like her. I want to see dear aunty Delmere and Pompey.”

The pen of Cowper could not have afforded a delight beyond what those disjointed sentences produced. The child was decidedly well and happy, and cousin Arundel’s unwillingness to have her moveables disturbed was no unpromising omen of a speedy return. How Agatha

was become so great a scribe in so short a time was a mystery that would bear some conjectural discussion, for when she left the cottage she could not join her letters—her hand had been guided—but by whom? clearly not by Mrs. Arundel; was it possible her grandfather could have the good-nature to do such a thing? that would give a very different impression from any hopes Sir Edward had held out respecting him when closely questioned. Upon the whole, there was considerable satisfaction extracted from this epistle, curious as it was; and great dependance upon the continued assistance of the same kind hand when Winny wrote again.

Sophia was now sufficiently relieved and revived to be open to the persuasions of her mother and sister, for resuming some of the occupations in which she had formerly taken pleasure; amongst others, she joined Henry in sketching

from nature, which drew her into occasional rides, and improved both her health and spirits.

The following week brought a second letter; for Winny had been ordered to write once a week, and now that convenience was out of the question, she was implicit in obedience; but her genius soared no higher than before; it was an accurate repetition of the former, which, however, became rather diverting, as the addition by Agatha supplied intelligence; but this time it neither related to grandpapa nor cousin, it was about "Cesar, and Will, and Jack, and the poney"—still ending with a strong wish for "aunty Delmere and Pompey."

It seemed improbable, that if grandpapa were the assistant, he should not have suggested something more satisfactory than all this; and Sophia now recurred to an idea she had once before mentioned, of beginning a correspond-

ence with Mrs. Arundel ; but Sir Edward had discouraged ~~us~~ ~~him~~ ~~it~~ explaining his motive, which increased the awkwardness of now doing the thing.

Katty, who was present, came forward with the offer of her services ; “ She should feel no awkwardness about it at all ; for, in the first place, she had a fair opening, from having once seen Mrs. Arundel at a distance in the rooms at Tunbridge ; and an opening was every thing with people who had the knack of letter-writing ; and without meaning to boast, it was what she rather valued herself upon.”

“ Why yes, Katty, to do you justice, I think you may value yourself upon the knack of dilating a little matter over as many pages of fair paper, as any epistolis-
ing or novel-writing female of the age !” said Mr. Villars.

“ Thank you, brother !” she replied, with an air of self-complacency ; “ I don’t

often get your good word, so I may hold up my head! And, niece Delmere, I am ready to dilate to Mrs. Arundel as soon as you please."

The offer was good-humouredly declined, and Sophia's embarrassment spared by a communication from Sir Edward Arundel to Mrs. Villars the next day.

He had spent a day or two at the Castle in his way to visit a friend, he said, and imagined it would be satisfactory to Mrs. Villars and Mrs. Delmere, to be assured that Agatha seemed to be perfectly well and happy; and had a little companion in the niece of the housekeeper, who was able to assist her epistolary attempts, and he understood had guided her hand in the letters already sent; this girl would also prove useful in reading to Agatha any admonitions Mrs. Delmere might wish to convey. He expected to be there again in the course of the month, and should then

be able to form a more competent opinion of the child's situation.

This was all that could be obtained for the present; Sophia felt obliged for the attention, and endeavoured to rest satisfied with it.

CHAP. XI.

It is presumed that no reader, in the habit of bestowing attention on pages such as these, nor yet those deeper students who search that more copious volume, the book of nature, will for one moment suspect love to have been idle at the Park and the Priory, whilst friendship was raising such commotion in the breast of Sir Edward Arundel.

Far other was the case! and rapid indeed were the strides the treacherous imp had there been making, during the weeks that Agatha's concerns had involved interests so deep and various.

Charles Belmont's devotion became every hour more obvious, nor were the gentle Emily's slumbers unbroken as heretofore.

Mrs. Villars marked the progress of the young man's attachment with the eye of maternal solicitude; he appeared to her in an unexceptionable light; honourable, candid, incapable either of indulging in unmeaning flirtation, or of setting his father's authority at nought. Emily's fortune and connections could only be objected to by very high-minded parents indeed; she conceived her personal merit might not carry much weight with Lord Belmont; but on the whole, she saw reason to conclude, that unless he had decidedly fixed upon another match, his son's choice would be likely to influence his. She was averse to parental interference, unless some very important objection, either to character or morals, called for it; still she could not quite dismiss her fears of Lord Belmont's am-

bition. Emily's silence upon the subject surprised, and rather alarmed her. She, whose heart was ever on her lips! she dreaded her affections becoming too deeply engaged; and resolved to talk the matter over with Mr. Villars.

Mr. Villars had observed nothing of the kind, and gave no sort of credit to its existence; at all events, however, he was clearly of opinion to let things take their course. He reverted to his favourite maxim of 'not governing too much,' which he asserted, should be as carefully avoided in a family, as Adam Smith had proved it ought to be in a state; and indeed to this plan he had pretty faithfully adhered from the hour of his children's birth; for though he had never shown displeasure at Mrs. Villars's interference to check their youthful errors, when she had proved successful, he regularly contended that it would have corrected itself, if let alone; and when she failed in her attempt, he was

very clear it had *much better* have been let alone.

A want of due regulation in the mind of Sophia, was the consequence of his having taken her, as his favourite child, more particularly under his own protection, against the methods Mrs. Villars wished to have adopted to curb the impetuosity and self-confidence to which from infancy she had been prone; but Emily was left to her mother's own management—and assuredly did credit to it. Nature, indeed, had endowed her with a mind of no common cast; her sense of piety might be called innate, because with the same degree of religious instruction which had been bestowed upon her brother and sister, it had taken a so much stronger hold upon her thoughts, as to be the leading spring of all her actions. Self-controul, humility, and a total absence of self-love, were its natural result; she could derive happiness

from the happiness of those around her, though at the expence of her own; this disinterestedness has been the boast of love and friendship from time immemorial; but she might say, with the Athenian of old, 'what others professed she did.'

It was this humble sense of her own merit that had kept her silent to her mother with respect to Charles Belmont; she did not conceive his regard for her, to be of so serious a nature as that she should have any thing to impart upon the subject; nothing but the most unpardonable vanity could lead to the supposition, that because he preferred her conversation to her sister's and Laura's, he could deem her worthy to be trusted with the care of his happiness through life;—but oh! that whoever he did select might but have it as much at heart as she should!

Charles had, however, for some time been anxiously upon the watch for an

opportunity of fully opening his mind to her; but she was so constantly surrounded by her family, as made it nearly impossible to find one.

A scheme had been in agitation, and strongly urged by Lord Belmont, for his joining a party to visit the Grecian Isles; but relinquished by his lordship, who had lately formed a plan for a matrimonial connexion for his son, with Lady Sabina Ormsby, daughter to the Marquis of Kingsborough. Charles, not yet aware of this change of purpose, felt the importance of declaring his passion to his father, previous to his departure, with a view to avert the danger of an engagement's being formed for him during his absence, too well knowing the difference between Lord Belmont's ideas and his own, upon that head. The conviction of this difference, however, impressed him with a dread that had more than once sealed his lips when on the point of unbosoming himself

to his parent. After several such fluctuations, he had finally resolved to ascertain Emily's opinion first, and be guided by her *when* to speak.

Fortune at length seemed inclined to favour him ; and as he was going towards the Priory he chanced to perceive Emily returning alone from the village, where she had been distributing comfort, and receiving it from the consciousness of the good she had done. Her countenance beamed with more than its usual sweetness.

Belmont trod in air !

He earnestly requested her to go round by the shrubbery, instead of the direct road ; to which she readily assented.

But how was she confounded and overcome when he declared in the most unequivocal terms that the whole happiness of his life was centered in her ! and after having obtained from her silence the

concurrence in his wishes which she could not find voice to utter, he stated to her his irresolutions with regard to his father, expecting a renewal of the urgency for the Grecian expedition, as soon as the visit of the Marquis of Kingsborough's family should be ended; for it was on the plea of civility to them, that Lord Belmont had proposed the *delay*, as he chose to call it, of his son's departure, not doubting but the effect of Lady Sabina's charms would naturally convert the delay into abandonment of the plan, without betraying the previous arrangement between the 'high contracting powers.'

Emily did not feel competent to forming an opinion in that agitated moment; but desired time to consult her mother upon it. He was willing to be ultimately guided by her mother's decision; but still he urged for her own idea; and as she recovered somewhat more of com-

posure, it struck her that she ought not to let him bind himself by any irretrievable step, such as a disclosure to Lord Belmont would be, when he was going for a length of time among new people and new objects, that might entirely change the course of his own wishes.

These were suggestions to which he could not listen for an instant. ‘ Rivers should run back to their source,’ &c. &c. &c. (as every lover knows) ere change should take place in affection so justified—so riveted as his.

But Emily abided by the reference to her mother, and he was fain to submit.

She now sought Mrs. Villars, with a sense of new-born happiness, almost painful to bear; imparted to her what had passed, and met with her perfect concurrence in the idea of not suffering her lover to shackle himself by a disclosure to his father before his departure. Charles was not yet twenty-five; and Mrs. Villars ob-

served, that the various temptations which must assail rich and inexperienced travellers in foreign countries, might so change him, as to make him no longer the man to whom she could be satisfied to entrust her daughter's happiness; independently of the danger to the steadiness of his own inclinations from the variety of attractive objects amongst whom he would be thrown.

Emily had no apprehension of *his* falling short of perfection; all her doubts turned upon her own insufficiency to stand the comparison he would have the opportunity of making; and her determination was, not to be an obstacle to his happiness, in whatever shape he might seek it. Her lover submitted to the award, without subscribing to the validity of the grounds; and the communication was deferred.

Shortly after this explanation, however, Lord Belmont dropped a hint of not much caring if the foreign tour were

altogether given up, at which Charles had eagerly caught ; in consequence of which it was settled that the application to him upon the important subject should only be delayed till the departure of the visitors now expected at the Park.

CHAP. XII.

ON the appointed day the party arrived ; it consisted of the Marquis and Marchioness of Kingsborough, Lord Leonard, and Lady Sabina Ormsby, Sir Tristram Traverse, Colonel Morgan, and a train of fashionable loungers, not worthy the honour of being named.

Report had not failed to be before-hand with their arrival ; the beauty and accomplishments of Lady Sabina Ormsby, and her being the destined bride of Mr. Belmont, had been canvassed and settled to the satisfaction of the neighbourhood, from the moment it was understood they were expected at Belmont Park ; but the

unmeaning gossip had passed unheeded by Charles and Emily.

Lady Sabina was, indeed, a person upon whose perfections it could not be expected the world should be silent ; nor was it wished.

Nature had done much, and education more, to make her all that could dazzle and attract ; of a commanding height and finely proportioned—a brilliant complexion and regular features—dressed with the studied elegance and care of the M—— of —— . She stepped with Grassinian grace—sat at her harp in the true Krumpholtz style—eat her soup in Vestris's most approved manner—in short, not a look or motion were other than they ought to be ; her address was gracious and condescending—her language critically correct—she danced—she played—she sung—she painted. Rose Didelot—Cramer,—Tramezzani—Glover—had exhausted their art in her instruction.

What then was wanting to make so

fine a creature perfect? O! not merely 'a heart!' but principle! a well cultivated mind! the golden rule of right! that prompted those virtues of early times, which distinguished a Hutchinson*, and a Russell†, and infused a soul into their very writings, that will perpetuate their claims to admiration to the latest posterity.

Principle, strongly and judiciously inculcated, might have supplied Lady Sabina's want of simplicity and feeling, and not have proved unuseful perchance in regulating her conduct through life; but what time could be found for implanting so obsolete a qualification amidst the toil of superior accomplishments, that were calculated to place her at the very summit of ton.

Nothing was neglected, however, that could supply the place of more genuine

* Mrs. Hutchinson wrote the memoirs of her husband Colonel Hutchinson,

† Lady Rachel Russel.

attributes. Tones of commiseration—attitudes—fine eyes cast up—or cast down—sure of their effect every way.

When the Villars's were first introduced to this master-piece of modern education, they were literally dazzled by the radiance she seemed to shed around; but the evening did not pass away without Mrs. Villars and Henry having detected where the deficiency lay.

Emily, indeed, had felt herself shrink into nothing on beholding her; the surmises of the neighbourhood darted into her mind; and if there were the smallest ground for them, could she come into any sort of competition with perfections so unrivalled? Charles, however, soon restored her, not to consequence in her own eyes, (for that she never felt, but to a very satisfactory conviction of her consequence in his, for he devoted himself solely to her, and scarcely appeared conscious of the presence of the beauty.

Lady Sabina came forward to Emily,

with the most becoming affability; inquired what was the distance from Hurstbourne Priory to Belmont Park? whether she was fond of walking, or riding? whether Miss Villars never went to London? to which last question, receiving for answer, that Emily had no particular wish to go; her Ladyship said, "Dear! how unaccountable!"

"Not wholly," said Charles; "Mr. Villars was ailing at the time: Miss Villars received an invitation from Mrs. Valacort, and she is extremely given to make her own pleasure a very secondary consideration."

"You give me more credit than I deserve, Mr. Belmont," said Emily; "it is the height of selfishness I give way to in my preference of home."

Lady Sabina did not think proper to make any farther observation, but a slight depression of the corner of her beautiful mouth, showed her some of such an avowed want of taste.

When the doors had closed upon the Villars family, Sir Tristram Traverse exclaimed, "What an eminently exquisite creature that Emily is! such a catastopical contour of countenance! such a seductive softness of eye!—Eh Morgan!" referring to one of his companions.

"Very good!—very good, Traverse!" was the answer.

"Rather too much of the *Penserosa* for me though."

"Better the *Penserosa* than the *Manierosa*," Lord Leonard Ormsby observed, who seldom missed an opportunity of glancing at what so much disturbed him in his sister.

"No air of fashion whatever," lisped out a young lady of the party.

"Miss Villars has such a Madona cast of countenance," said Lady Sabina, "that I should conceive she must have studied Guido."

"Studied!" cried Charles Belmont, "is a countenance to be formed by study?"

"Assuredly," was the reply; "Lady Hamilton assumed the expression of the countenance, as much as the attitude and drapery of the statues she represented — and by frequent repetition you know any particular expression might become habitual."

"The Niobe!—I should name the Niobe in comparison," resumed Sir Tristram, "that bewitching bend of the finely formed head!"

"By heaven!" interrupted Lord Leonard, "Correggio himself might have acquired a new grace from studying her; his Saint Catharine is nothing to it."

"The devil, Ormsby! when did I ever hear you profuse of praise before!"

"You might—if you had ever happened to see me in company with *natural* grace and simplicity before," returned Lord Leonard.

"Grace!" repeated the lisping Miss, contemptuously, "why she had a beauti-

ful shawl on, and made nothing of it at all."

"Forgive her! on the score of not yet having been in London," said Charles, ironically; "she could never see the Gaiton."

"The Gaiton!" exclaimed Sir Tristram; "ah gad! gabble not of the Gaiton! the peerless Parisot!—carry back your thoughts to her; 'twas she had the felicitous fortune to strike out the shawl dance, for which Vestris himself declared she deserved a statue."

This turned the conversation to that topic of inexhaustible interest, the merits of the opera dancers, which, from diffidence of doing justice to a subject of such high and general importance, or perchance the more author-like fear of betraying ignorance, I think it better to suppress.

Emily Villars was, however, now left at rest for the evening. Laura, though

much annoyed by all these encomiums on her friend, had cautiously kept silence, notwithstanding her power of throwing in an occasional word with very good effect; for none possessed the art of 'damning with faint praise,' in greater perfection than she did; but she was fearful of betraying herself to Charles.

Though the habit of criticising visitors was not prevalent at the Priory, personages so conspicuous, and of whom fame had said so much, could not but be objects of peculiar curiosity.

When the family returned from the park, Katty, who had staid at home to play backgammon with Mr. Villars, impatiently exclaimed, "Well! let's hear all how and about your visit—is this Lady Sabina actually such a piece of perfection as never was seen or heard of before?"

"She is, without exception, the most beautiful accomplished creature I ever beheld!" said Emily; "and so unaffected—"

edly obliging!—played and sung at the very first word, and in such a finished style!”

Mrs. Villars cherished in her heart this gratifying instance of her daughter's candour, and perfect freedom from all narrowness of mind, for she painfully marked the impression Lady Sabina's appearance had made upon her in the first moment; nor had she been able herself to avoid a sensation of fear that there might be grounds for the reports in circulation.

“I was struck with her perfect pronunciation of the Italian,” said Henry, “and felt almost inclined to criticise it for being *too* affectedly good;—I mean that altogether there was too much of stage effect in her performance. I think in music, as in dancing, there is a lady-like style of well doing, which I would have stop short of professional perfection.”

Emily took Lady Sabina's defence, and

contended that "whatever was worth doing at all, was worth doing to the extent of one's powers."

"Now Emily, you are arguing against your conscience," replied Henry, with a pleased smile, from being struck by the same observation his mother had made. "*You* would no more show off in a comic buffo song à la Hamilton, as she did, if you had the power, than you would dance like the Theodore."

"But I am not speaking of myself, Henry. You don't consider the difference between a town and country education. Lady Sabina is accustomed to exhibitions that I should be terrified to death at the very thoughts of."

"But I hope, my dear, you did exhibit though," said Katty, a good deal dissatisfied with all these encomiums, when she hoped to have heard the very reverse, from apprehension of danger to Charles Belmont's affections, whom she had long destined in her own mind as Emily's

future husband. "I hope the Irish melodies were brought forward."

"O no! it was all Italian, and chiefly scientific music, in which Laura bore her part admirably—the Irish melodies would not have suited at all, dear aunt—they were never thought of."

"Never thought of! why, goodness me! where was Mr. Belmont, to let them be forgot? I wish I had been there, I should have taken care to have them thought of, I promise you.—I've no notion of that indeed!—Well, and what are the rest of them?" she continued pettishly, "are they all so charming and so delightful?"

Emily and Henry restored her to good humour, by their lively description of the remainder of the company; but as they are not of sufficient interest to claim much of the reader's attention, we shall pass on to the next morning, when a visit from some of the party gave Katty an opportunity of judging for herself.

It had not been with Charles Belmont's habitual good grace, that he had acceded to the proposal made by Lord Leonard to his sister, at breakfast, of requesting his and Laura's escort to the Priory. He had been much struck by his Lordship's strongly expressed admiration of Emily, though in some degree gratified by it too—and underwent an agitating mixture of feelings, which were a little tranquilised, however, by the recollection that she had paid no sort of attention to him—and as no pretence for objecting suggested itself, he could not chuse but comply, though with a determination of keeping a watchful eye upon him.

Laura was not now sparing of her inuendoes, as on the evening before. Safe from being overheard by Charles, in her walk arm in arm with Lady Sabina to the Priory, she threw out various insinuations calculated to impress her companion's mind with the idea that Emily was not a person likely to excite a serious

passion ; anxious to keep all suspicion of an attachment on her brother's part out of Lady Sabina's thoughts, in the fear of its checking the predilection with which she hoped to inspire her new friend for him. For on that she built for awakening corresponding feelings in his breast ; well knowing his weak side to be vanity, in a smaller proportion perhaps than the rest of the family ; but still, unfortunately for him, bearing too great a share in his composition.

She might have spared herself the trouble. Lady Sabina was so little accustomed to have either beauty or accomplishments brought into competition with her own, that Laura's hints made no impression on her, one way or other. She thought Emily pretty, which was all she ever attended to, and was ready to acknowledge it, because she felt her own pre-eminence, and because people and things glided very lightly over a mind so engrossed by self. To shine was the

object of her life ; and as she felt satisfied she always succeeded, it put her into good humour with all around.

Mr. Villars was struck with her appearance, as no one could fail to be ; and Katty found herself spell-bound, in spite of her predetermination to find fault.

Emily was busy in her flower-garden ; Lady Sabina, with Laura and Lord Leonard, immediately joined her.

“ Do not you tear your hands and your cloaths shockingly, in cutting those roses ?” Lady Sabina asked.

“ Sometimes ; but I guard my hands with pretty strong gloves, and I do not expose very elegant attire to the thorns,” appealing to her coloured gardening gown.

“ But you must get so dreadfully tanned !”

“ I can perceive no very striking evidence of that,” said Lord Leonard.

“ I guess your Ladyship is not very fond of flowers !” Emily said.

“Not particularly.”

“You like to enjoy the pleasure of a garden, without the trouble,” Emily resumed.

“I am not very fond of a garden in any way.”

“Park, scenery, and woods, probably ! beauties upon a grander scale !”

“No—I can’t think what people can see to admire in them.”

“You look with a painter’s eye for more romantic features !”

“I must confess, I don’t pay much attention to the beauty of country of any description.”

“Being, as I have understood, an admirable artist, you of course take views from nature ; and the contemplation of nature, I should have thought, could hardly fail of creating interest.”

“I think it very troublesome to take views ; I am contented to copy.”

“Are you fond of drawing ?”

“No, not at all ; I dislike it.”

"But you must have bestowed much time upon it, to have made so great a proficiency!" said Emily, with some surprise.

"Yes; because one must draw so as to gain credit, you know."

"Music is probably your favourite pursuit."

"O dear no!--I think I hate music more than drawing."

"What a self-denying life your Ladyship must lead!" Henry Villars observed, who had now joined them.

"Time must be got rid of in some way or other; so it's no great matter how!"

"Ladies are apt to find work answer that purpose very well!" said Henry, who occasionally grudged the hours his sister bestowed upon it.

"Yes; I wish I liked work!"

"Henry, you are not fair upon that subject," said Emily; "and I am sometimes inclined to suspect you of envying

us the agreeable resource of employing our fingers in company, in failure of conversation, as Dr. Johnson acknowledged he did."

"Dr. Johnson, when he was told of some unfortunate man, who had committed suicide, said he would have been saved from it if he had known how to hem a pocket handkerchief," Lord Leonard observed.

"Dear! what a vulgar idea!" cried Lady Sabina.

"Your Ladyship, I presume, is fond of reading," said Henry; "the ladies of this generation are bound to be even scientific."

"I should be extremely sorry to be suspected of that!" she replied; "it's what all the men turn into ridicule."

"What, Sabina? reading?" asked Lord Leonard.

"No; science to be sure! you know Leonard, I have no sort of objection to reading, when I have leisure."

“What is your favourite study?” Emily inquired.

“I am not particular as to that—any new thing that Hookham recommends. I leave it to him, with a strict charge, however, to send me only what is very entertaining; for really it is so much the fashion to take people in now, with an expectation of story, and give them nothing but morality from beginning to end.”

“Yes, in truth a lady had need be upon her guard, now a days, that she be not trepanned into knowledge, will-he nill-he, when she is only seeking to while away time in the innocent recreation of a little light reading,” said Henry archly to Laura, who had somewhat separated herself from the others.

“Oh wicked!—I shall not allow you to exercise your wit at the expence of my friend,” whispered Laura, with a smile that was meant to compensate the rebuke.

Word was now brought that the horses were ready.

"That's a beautiful mare, Lady Sabina!" said Henry.

"I'm glad you think so," she replied; "I did not so much care about that, as her being grey, because it sets off a dark riding habit to the best advantage."

"She shows blood too," he added, scarce able to suppress a smile at the reason given; "are you a stout horsewoman?"

"I ought to be, for I went to Fossard's three years."

"Then we may conclude you are fond of riding?"

"One must do like other people; but I can't say I much delight in it."

"We had a very splendid ball in this neighbourhood, last week," said Henry, "worthy of being graced by your ladyship's presence—it is unlucky for us, you did not come in time for it; and for you, if you are fond of dancing."

"I was at the R——t's fête, which I should have missed."

"We were told the dancing was not good there."

"I consider dancing as the worst part of a ball."

"A new and original view of the subject, I should think," said Henry, who was himself fond of dancing.

"Dear no!—not at all—ask all the tonish men, they'll tell you it's odious!—disorders the hair and the dress, and makes one such a figure!"

Lord Leonard, quite provoked with all her dislikes, though he could scarce help being diverted with them too, exclaimed, "I really must, with Mr. Hobson in Cecilia, ask 'what it is you do like,' Sabina, for in truth there seems nothing left."

"I like chess—and making shoes—and playing the solitaire," she replied.

Chess and shoemaking surprised every one; the solitaire nobody.

DOMESTIC SCENES.

When it appeared in the evening, her being challenged to the chess-board, that all her fondness for it consisted in devising a variety of graceful meditative postures, and drawing attention to them by calling upon every body for advice at each move, that wonder ceased.

And when making shoes amounted to nothing more than having them tossing on the table before her, in evidence of the delicacy of the foot they were to fit, and playing with the implements, whilst her maid was in fact the shoemaker—this wonder ceased also.

But the *solitaire* was in fact admirably suited to her natural disposition, which was as indolent as vain; she could have sat contentedly upon her Ottomane from noon till night, displaying her pretty hands and fingers, in moving about the pegs, and being looked at. Vanity had indeed carried her through the labours of her education; but happy would she have

been to purchase celebrity at an easier rate—however, it was now secured ; and she was fully determined that whenever the great object of a suitable establishment should be secured also, and parental controul at an end, she would ‘repose upon her laurels,’ and devote her hours to that *sacro santo Far-niente*, she so highly revered in common with the Italians.

Mr. Villars had laid most inconsiderate hold of poor Charles, first by the arm and then by the button, to talk over Malthus’s Population, which interested him deeply ; and he entered into an elaborate argument, to which Charles gave unqualified assent, without hearing one word of it ; his eyes and attention wholly fixed upon Emily and Lord Leonard. Various but vain were his attempts to escape ; Mr. Villars had the subject too much at heart, and finally insisted upon his taking a chair by him, that he might discuss the matter at large.

By which means, all these develope-

ments of Lady Sabina's mind and disposition remained unknown to Charles; for his sister carefully concealed them, and Emily was too generous to expose them; severe only to herself, she was ever ready to excuse the failings of others, and she gave Lady Sabina credit for so much good-nature (which in her eyes covered a multitude of faults), that she did not even judge her as unfavourably as the rest did.

This morning's visit naturally produced an invitation to dinner at the Priory, for an early day of the following week.

CHAP. XIII.

It is reasonable to suppose that the habits of gossiping, and the dearth of materials at Belmont Park, must have brought the fair recluse more than once under consideration. Much curiosity respecting her was of course excited, and various plans laid for obtaining a sight of her—of this, Charles Belmont assured them there was no chance during their stay.

Sir Tristram Traverse said, it would be the first instance of his being foiled in any fancy he had set his heart on; and if any of them would bet him a sufficient sum, he would engage not only to get

acquainted now, but to marry this superlatively superhuman being within the twelvemonth.

“Come! I’ll bet you five hundred upon that,” said Colonel Morgan.

“No, no! curse my capacity, if I’ll be bribed into matrimonial bondage by five hundred!—bet me five thousand, and I might say something to it.”

“Well! I’ll bet you the five hundred, you don’t get acquainted with her during this visit!” returned Colonel Morgan.

“Let’s see!—how many days is it to the October meeting? one—two—three—four! oh! I say done to that!”

“But mind, Traverse! I don’t mean merely a sight of her over her garden paling, or obtaining an answer to some common place question, or getting access to her in disguise.”

“No; I’ll be upon honour; it shall be acknowledged acquaintance, made in my own proper person.—No double dealing on your part though!—no insidi-

ous insinuation! or sly suggestion through a third hand, to put her upon her guard! all fair and above board."

This was agreed, and done! and done! repeated on both sides.

Laura had promoted the joke by an occasional stimulus of doubt, in the hope that Sir Tristram's success might make mischief with Sir Edward Arundel. Charles, on the contrary, was provoked and vexed at the levity with which Emily's sister was treated, and felt strongly tempted to put it in her power to give Sophia a hint of the matter, especially as he foresaw that Sir Tristram's success would expose the name of Mrs. Delmere to be bandied about amongst all the libertines in town. The sacredness of a bet, however, condemned him to silence, and he could only trust to her extricating herself by her own presence of mind.

Sir Tristram forthwith began an examination of the cottage garden—of its

relative situation to the village ; for there she was known to visit the school of industry, although she at present abstained from going to the Priory. He made acquaintance with some of the children of the cottagers, by means of half-pence judiciously distributed, and learnt that Madam Delmere always heard them say their catechism at the school on a Saturday afternoon.

This being fortunately Saturday, he contrived to place himself where he might, unperceived, see her pass, to guard against the danger of a mistake. Having watched her safe into the school, he patiently awaited her return, taking his station in a narrow lane through which she had to go ; he made her a respectful bow as they met, which she returned by a slight though civil inclination of the head, and he suffered her to pass on,—following at a little distance however. She quickened her pace on perceiving that he did so.

Just as she approached her own wicket he came up with her, and apologising for the liberty of addressing her, requested to know whether a little dog he had seen (describing Pompey) were hers?

“It was.”

“In that case, he begged to caution her—as the alarm of a mad dog had been given in the village, during the time she was at the school.”

“She thanked him, but her dog had not been with her.” And was going into the cottage.

“One word more, he could not help saying—the dog might have got out during her absence—he had seen the little spaniel he described in the very path the mad dog had taken—if he might be allowed a sight of hers, he could ascertain it.”

“She was obliged to him, and would order the dog to be shown to him.” In saying which, with a civil bow, she ab-

ruptly, went into the cottage, and shut the door.

The dog was brought; and he charged the servant to say, that he was extremely happy to observe some marks upon Pompey that proved him to have been mistaken, in fearing it was the dog he had seen.

“He had made an opening at least—that was something!—cursed cool too!—d—d dry!—what a queer quiz she must be!—never threw away so much civility before!—devil drub him, if he were not tempted to go to church to-morrow, and study her countenance for a clue by which to shape his course!” For so completely was she enveloped in bonnet, veil, and shawl, that he could form no guess at her features whatever.

To church he accordingly went—but no Mrs. Delmere was there!

Sophia had given little credit to the story of the dog, which she thought she must have heard of in the village. She

sent her servant, however, to ascertain the fact; finding it a fabrication, and judging Sir Tristram to be one of the visitors at the Park, she determined to keep out of the way of being again accosted, by confining herself to the precincts of her own little domain during their stay.

In vain had Sir Tristram lounged about in every direction throughout the day—a severe disappointment!—after having taken the trouble of going to church too! it increased the gloom of the sabbath day idleness at the Park. Two days only now remained for accomplishing his object. Having stretched his length for a considerable time upon the sofa, to ruminate on farther proceedings, he finally yawned out, “Would to heaven those Villars’s had fixed upon this day for their invitation!”

“Why so?” Lord Belmont asked, who just then awakened from *his habitual Sunday evening nap*.

"Because of breaking into the immensely immeasurable length of a Sunday in the country," he replied.

"Immensely immeasurable is good!" cried Colonel Morgan. "Very good, Traverse!—and new!—we owe you one for that!"

"Yes, I think it is good," returned Sir Tristram. "You are up to us, Belmont? Hey! you take us?"

"I perceive you have a peculiar taste for alliteration—if that's what you mean," answered Belmont.

"Taste!—it's a bet!—a cool thousand upon it!"

"Upon what?"

"Why upon hitting off good fair alliteration."

"But in what way a bet?"

"Why you shall hear. You know Tom Trivett, I suppose.—Poor Tom! though he's a dead hand at Latin and Greek, spells his English like his washer-woman.—So we were talking of allitera-

tion, in reference to those new novels, you know.—So says Jack Gibe, ‘what do you mean by alliteration?’—‘That’s a good one,’ says Tom; ‘don’t you know what alliteration is? Why words beginning with the same letter, such, for instance, as *famous philosopher—wretched Richard*—and the like.—That’s alliteration!’ says he. You may guess what a laugh we all burst into; so then he insisted that sound would mislead any of us.—I took him up, and offered a bet of a thousand, that I would go on for a twelvemonth, without ever making a blunder.—‘Done,’ says he; ‘and here’s Morgan bound to be my inseparable for the time, and to have a bonus if he detects me.’ So that set the whole club a going you see; and when I strike out a very new one, Morgan puts it down.”

“Are billiards among the proscribed recreations for a Sunday evening?” Colonel Morgan inquired, yawning in his turn.

“ Nothing is proscribed that can be agreeable to our guests,” Lord Belmont replied; “ only it is decorous, you know, to set a good example in the country ; so we go to church, and refrain from cards ; in London, *c’est une autre affaire !*”

“ *Allons donc* for the billiard table !” cried Colonel Morgan ; and the whole party followed with great alacrity ; when a few cool hundreds won and lost, effectually served to dissipate the tedium of the Sunday evening.

Much inquiry had been made into the state of the bet, but Sir Tristram was not in the humour to satisfy curiosity.

On retiring to his own apartment, he was apprized by his man, that Mademoiselle Victoire was waiting-woman to Mrs. Delmere, a French *femme de chambre* ! Might indeed prove an useful auxiliary ! So he ordered his servant to appoint a meeting with her, before her lady should be stirring in the morning, having something important to communicate.

. Mademoiselle Victoire desired nothing better than important communications ; she had often found them productive, and was punctual to the appointment.

Sir Tristram questioned her minutely upon the true state of Mrs. Delmere's spirits ; her way of life ; the practicability of devising any mode of throwing himself into her way, so as to produce acquaintance.

Nothing could be more unpromising than the answers he received — the *éloignement* of *Madame pour tout ce qui s'appelle société* was *inconcevable*.

“ Had she no object of interest ? nothing that attracted her attention ? ”

“ *Helas non !* she cared about nothing in the world, except *Mademoiselle Agathe* and Pompey.”

A bright thought now darted across his mind. “ Could Victoire convey Pompey to him ? that would serve as an introduction, and he would restore him in a few hours.”

She hesitated,—“If it were discovered she should lose her place.”

He found means to silence her scruples, and got possession of the dog; which was carefully secured, till the hour when Sir Tristram, with some exulting forebodings, thought proper to appear with him at the cottage.

Katty was coming out from the wicket; at sight of Pompey, she uttered a scream of delight. “Search had been every where making for him,” she said.

“How extremely fortunate that he should just have been in time to recognise and rescue him!—”

“Goodness, sir! what was going to be done with him?”

“That he should beg leave to communicate to Mrs. Delmere herself; it was important she should know it; might he hope to obtain admittance?”

“She made no manner of doubt of it; it stood to reason that her niece would be so excessively obliged to him.”

Sir Tristram now believed he had reached the goal.

Katty led the way straight into the parlour; where, however, Mrs. Delmere was not.

"Where upon earth can she be flown to?" exclaimed Katty. "I left her here not a minute ago!—If you'll please to be seated, sir, I'll fetch her to you directly."

Sophia, rather distrustful of who Katty might be talking to, had peeped through the Venetian blind, and effected a timely retreat to her bed-chamber before they entered the parlour.

Sir Tristram almost felt the five hundred pounds in his pocket; and amused himself with preparing a few additions to the narrative of Pompey's rescue, little caring whether they were detected next day, so they answered the present purpose. The delay in the old lady's return, he construed into a favourable omen—the fair widow had possibly wish-

ed to improve her dress for the reception of a stranger—if he could discover the slightest approach to coquetry in her, he should not scruple to let her into the truth of the affair, and perhaps prevail with her to favour the bet, by allowing him to attend her in triumph to the Priory.

He moved towards the glass upon this; and saw no cause to doubt his success, if she had any thing of the woman in her composition at all!—

Sir Tristram had by dint of whiskers and padding obtained the reputation of a handsome man! and although habitually somewhat of the blackguard, he could be the gentleman upon occasion; and he prepared to meet Mrs. Delmere in his very best manner.

Time was given him to con over all these matters to his heart's content.

At length the door opened, and Katty appeared alone.—

“ May I flatter myself, madam—”

“ Bless my heart, sir !” interrupting him, “ I am really so confused and perplexed, I don’t know how to make a proper apology for my niece’s not appearing.—”

“ I beg, ma’am, she may not be hurried on my account ; my time is hers, and—”

“ My patience, sir ! why, if you were to wait till doomsday, you’d be never a bit the better ; I never knew her so obstinate and unreasonable before !”

“ You don’t mean that Mrs. Delmere refuses me the honour of making my bow to her ?”

“ As sure as you are alive, sir, she does !”

“ Were you so good as to inform her who it was ? and for what purpose ?”—

“ As to who, sir, I could not so exactly tell her, not happening to know your name myself ; but I can assure you every word I spoke was to the purpose, for I told her plainly, that a resolution was

one thing, and gratitude was another; and my dear niece, says I—”

“ You certainly, madam, could not have advanced a more undeniable truth,” interrupting her impatiently; “ but may I now request of you just to inform Mrs. Delmere, it is Sir Tristram Traverse who has been so fortunate as to rescue her little favourite, and only entreats one minute’s audience in return, having something of considerable moment to impart.”

“ I’m sure, Sir Tristram Traverse, you speak so reasonably, and like a gentleman, I couldn’t find in my heart to refuse you any thing, and you may command all my powers of persuasion.”

Sir Tristram became rather doubtful of their efficacy; however, he urged the trial.

She soon returned with no better success; “ assuring him it would be as easy to move a stock or a stone—not but what her niece sent her very best thanks to him

for bringing back the dog ;—and having as yet seen only her own family, if Sir Tristram would be so good as to communicate at the Priory what he might have to say, it would be exactly the same thing ;” and she offered to show him the way.

But the disappointed suitor took a cold and abrupt leave, which impressed Katty with much sympathy for his distress and grief for her niece’s ingratitude.

Sir Tristram had met with so few Sophias among his female acquaintance, that he was not prepared for being so completely foiled, and he now became, according to the French phrase, *piqué au jeu*.

One more resource was left him, in failure of this ; and he gave the necessary instructions to his groom for performing his part of the business ; having then seated himself in his tandem—or his tilbury—or his dog-cart—(fear of betraying ignorance checks the assertion

of which it might be,—very certainly, however, the newest and most fashionable vehicle of the day) he contrived his accident to admiration, and had the appearance of having been thrown out, just as he reached the cottage paling, where he very quietly remained lying till his servant returned with the runaway horse, and sent in the deplorable message, concerted between them, of the nearly lifeless state in which he found his master, requesting leave of Mrs. Delmere to have him laid upon a sofa or a bed till surgical assistance should be obtained.

How far Sophia might have been the dupe of this, is not easy to say; a lucky circumstance having saved her from the trial. Happening to have mounted her garden steps to tie up some creepers, she had seen the whole manœuvre—satisfied herself it was Sir Tristram—that he had voluntarily jumped out of the carriage—that the horse had only run on, when the reins were thrown upon his neck, to the

turning where the groom was stationed to stop him ; in consequence of which, she was prepared, when the doleful tidings were brought her, to answer that a sofa should be brought out to convey Sir Tristram to the Priory, where so much better care could be taken of him than in her confined habitation.

Sir Tristram very rapidly came to life upon this suggestion, abused his servant for a blockhead in making such a serious business of what only required cold water and a little patience ; and then having relieved his disappointment by ‘curses not loud but deep,’ he gave up his wager for lost.

He was too sulky, however, to acknowledge it, when Colonel Morgan put him in mind this was his last day. “The Ides of March are come, but not yet past,” said he ; “ stay till we are fairly off to-morrow morning.”

This was the day for dining at the Priory. As the company were lounging upon the

lawn before dinner, Sir Tristram seizing Lord Leonard's arm, began to recount to him his various discomfitures. Interested in the subject, they had imperceptibly strayed into the village path, when suddenly interrupting himself, he exclaimed, "By heaven! fortune favours me at last!—there she is!—now for a bold stroke!—"

It was in fact Sophia, who knowing the whole party to be engaged at the Priory, had ventured to the school, and was now returning.

They were already so near that Lord Leonard had no means of escaping from Sir Tristram's grasp, who holding him fast, and urging him forward, said, "Allow me, madam, to introduce Lord Leonard Ormsby to you—who must now do me the same favour," he would have added, but Sophia interrupted him with "Thank you, sir, for naming a protector to me! I rely upon the known character of Lord Leonard Ormsby for

saving me from insulting persecution!" —and with a very quick pace she retraced her steps.

Sir Tristram completely disconcerted, would, however, have attempted to follow her, had not Lord Leonard forcibly detained him. "Impossible after this!" he cried, "the acquaintance was to be voluntary, you know — your wager is fairly lost—but you have given me an introduction I may see cause to rue—upon my soul, I never beheld such another woman!"

Lord Leonard was indeed planet-struck; he had been much pleased, and what some might have called captivated, by Emily's simple and mild graces; but here, with greater brilliancy of beauty, was a dignity of countenance and manner unequalled. Her spirited appeal to his protection too! had something bewitchingly romantic in it!—altogether he was taken by surprise, and one short moment was productive to him of some lasting consequences.

Sophia had really felt alarm at the pertinacity and boldness of Sir Tristram's pursuit; and the claim she laid to Lord Leonard's protection was suggested by the favourable representation Emily had given of him in contrast with the manners of his companions.

The following morning lighted the Baronet and the Colonel on their way to Newmarket; and not a little disappointed was Victoire when she found Sir Tristram gone. "*Ah, bon dieu!*" she exclaimed contemptuously, "*ces messieurs Anglais n'en savent-ils pas plus long en fait de galanterie?—C'étoit ma foi bien la peine de voler le chien!*"

CHAP. XIV.

ON the next day, a letter was put into Sophia's hand from Mrs. Arundel ; with eager anxiety she opened it, and scarce dared trust her eyes, as she read, " That Agatha proved so entirely unmanageable as to oblige Mr. Arundel to request Mrs. Delmere would resume the charge of her ; which if she declined, would leave him no option but to make inquiry for a boarding-school at which to place her."

With joyful speed she set forth to communicate the intelligence at the Priory, being now relieved from the fear of meet-

ing the most objectionable part of the fashionable set.

Lord Leonard, whose mind was completely filled with the image of Sophia, felt anxious to exculpate himself from a participation in Sir Tristram's impertinence; but having been informed that no visitors were admitted at the Cottage, he simply paid the mark of respect of leaving his name there, and proceeded to the Priory with his explanations, not wholly divested of a latent hope, that through Emily's interest he might obtain leave to make his personal apology to her sister.

What was his delight upon entering the drawing-room to find Mrs. Delmore herself there!—she accepted his excuse obligingly, but expressed strong displeasure at having been made the object of a wager.

There was something quiet and rational in Lord Leonard's appearance that pleased Sophia, and led her not to con-

sider him as an obstacle to the solicitude she now felt to form her own opinion of Lady Sabina Ormsby. She feared Lord Belmont's ambition, and was alarmed for Emily's peace of mind. She did not know enough of Charles to judge how steadily he might resist his father's authority. She *did* know enough of Lord Belmont, from her mother's representation, to apprehend that the consideration of his son's happiness would but slightly influence his views; and she determined to join the party that was engaged to the Priory for the next evening, which only consisted of the younger set. Lord and Lady Kingsborough being gone to pay a visit in the neighbourhood.

And accordingly a very gay society assembled at the Priory, of which Sophia for the first time made one.

It had been no small gratification to Sir Edward Arundel, on his return to Rock Castle, to find he had augured so justly of the result of Agatha's visit; he

arrived just in time to avert all idea of the boarding-school, and smooth every difficulty respecting her return into Hampshire; to which he undertook to answer for Mrs. Delmere's entire acquiescence. He would himself take charge of her conveyance, without awaiting the answer to Mrs. Arundel's letter; having saddle-horses with him, he could give up the chaise to Agatha and her maid; and he appointed their short days journeys, so as to sleep where they did, by which means he assured himself of their safe progress.

He arrived with his young charge on that very afternoon, and his spirits not a little exhilarated with the thoughts of the happiness he had secured to Mrs. Delmere. He had so entirely laid aside the idea of caprice having had any share in his non-admittance at the Cottage, that he had upon this occasion only considered of the best means of marking his perfect conformity to the propriety

of it, and that was, to send the child and Winny straight there, and alight himself at the Priory; and, indeed, he also deemed it a handsomer mode of proceeding, than forcing his way in, under the plea of a kindness done to the little girl.

He was announced, therefore, at the Priory.

If his hilarity received an immediate check from being unexpectedly ushered into a gay society, some of whom were utter strangers to him, it was soon converted into absolute displeasure when he beheld Sophia. "Astonishing!—could he believe his eyes?—was Delmere's disconsolate widow in the midst of this numerous and fashionable set?—here was a change!"

Scarcely had he sufficient command of himself to stop, and impart the occasion of his visit.

Sophia came up to him with a look of pleasure and solicitude, "Did he know the fortunate result of Agatha's visit?"

Could he tell when her return might be expected?"

With the most chilling reserve, he replied, "He had had the honour of being entrusted to conduct her, and she was at this moment at the Priory cottage."

Sophia heard no more, but flew out of the room; and ere any of the shawls or bonnets that were sent after her could overtake her, had held her darling to her heart, weeping tears of joy over her recovered treasure. Agatha was frantic with delight, and Winny scarcely less so.

"Unaccountable medley of feeling and levity!" thought Sir Edward. "Alas! how deceptive my first impression of thee!—"

He stood absorbed in thought.

Mrs. Villars approached him. "I cannot suppose it to have been unpleasant tidings that took my daughter so abruptly from us," she said; "her countenance bore an expression I have not seen in it

this long and many a day; some very good news of her little niece, no doubt!"

"Agatha is safely restored to her care, madam; I undertook the office of being her conductor, and having acquitted myself of the task, I have the honour to wish you a good evening."

Laying her hand upon his arm, Mrs. Villars said, "You must not leave us so, Sir Edward! Mrs. Delmere will, I am persuaded, return, when she has seen Agatha, and be disappointed if she does not find you here to receive her thanks."

"Mrs. Delmere owes me none, madam," was his dry answer. "The child is of sufficient importance in our family to claim my services, whenever they may be wanted. You will, I hope, excuse my stay; my spirits are not equal to scenes of gaiety, I congratulate you upon Mrs. Delmere's being so soon restored to them; and must beg leave to make my bow."

Mrs. Villars let him go without farther opposition. She saw that he was disturbed; attributed it to his having been unexpectedly ushered into so large a circle, and made no doubt of his putting up at the inn, and their seeing him again in the morning.

Nothing could be more remote from the intentions of Sir Edward; he ordered his chaise the instant he had made his escape from the Priory; but his postilion being out of the way, he set forward on horseback, leaving orders for his chaise to follow him.

Mr. Villars was engaged at chess in the library, during Sir Edward's appearance and disappearance, and only stopped to finish his game before he wheeled himself into the drawing-room to welcome his guest.

But behold! the guest was gone!

"I thought Sir Edward Arundel was here," he said, looking around.

“ He is but just stepped after Mrs. Delmere to the Cottage, I fancy,” cried Katty; “ he’ll be back presently, I dare say.”

“ I believe you are quite mistaken, sister,” Mrs. Villars said; “ he seemed disturbed at our gay circle, and has retreated, I imagine, to the inn.”

“ Well, well!” returned Katty significantly, “ we shall see how that may be.”

This was not lost upon Laura Belmont, whose pleasure at his entrance had been succeeded by chagrin at his abrupt departure, which she could with difficulty conceal. The surprise, indeed, was general, and had scarcely subsided, when Sophia returned to apologise for her own sudden disappearance, anxious also to obtain information respecting Mr. Arundel’s farther views upon Agatha, and the situation she had been in, whilst at Rock Castle.

So entirely had her mind been engrossed by the child, that she had not observed the peculiarity of Sir Edward's manner; and when Mrs. Villars mentioned it, she instantly attributed it to the same cause her mother had done, made no doubt of his breakfasting at the Priory next morning, and applied herself to drawing Lady Sabina into some sort of conversation. She was soon satisfied of her deficiency in that respect, and well pleased moreover to see the evident insensibility of Charles, to the brilliant accomplishments that were called forth in the course of the evening.

Aunt Katty did not fail to introduce Emily's Irish melodies; the simple pathos of which were strikingly contrasted with the scientific bravura's of Lady Sabina and Laura, and produced their effect upon Charles and Lord Leonard to Katty's heart's content.

"Is it possible," Lord Leonard asked Emily, "that yours should be 'native

wood notes wild,' as Mrs. Katharine suggested, without any instruction?"

"Far from it," replied Emily, "my sister has been my instructress—I only have had no Italian master."

Lord Leonard's eye turned upon Sophia, with a look of admiration; which, however unheeded by her, did not pass unobserved.

"Shall we ever again be indulged with any of my old favourites, Sophia?" Henry asked.

"When Agatha comes to want musical instruction, perchance you may," was the answer, accompanied with a faint attempt to smile, which showed her brother that he had touched a painful string, and he checked Lord Leonard's wish to urge the request.

But Laura, who to attract Henry had learnt some of the little duets with Emily which he alluded to, immediately offered to join her, instead of Mrs. Delmere. They had not gone half through one of

them before poor Sophia was obliged to leave the room; it was the first time those notes had struck upon her ear, since her loss; they had been the delight of Delmere, and she could not stand it.

Henry, conscious of being the inconsiderate cause of her distress, hastened after her, and attended her to the Cottage; where, by judiciously turning her thoughts again to Agatha, he in some measure counteracted the mischief; and unwittingly transferred the sleepless night he feared having ensured to his sister, to the disappointed Laura, who, feeling she gained no ground with him, seeing Lord Leonard devoted to Mrs. Delmere, and Sir Edward Arundel again giving her the slip, vowed revenge upon her pillow, in some shape or other.

CHAP. XV.

At a very early hour of the next morning, Agatha burst into her aunt's room, jumped upon the bed, and threw her arms about her neck, with a fervour of affection, that in some degree atoned for its boisterous effusions.

“ Was this your usual morning's salutation to your grandpapa and Mrs. Arundel ?” Sophia asked.

“ My goodness, no, aunty ! I didn't love 'em well enough—granpa didn't like a noise, and old coz was so cross !”

“ But you were not always making a noise before you went there !”

“ No, because you used to let me do something I liked better.”

“ And did nobody think of any thing you could like better there? did nobody teach you any thing?”

“ O yes, indeed, aunty! Tom the groom taught me to ride Poney, and how to rise in the stirrup; and the names of all the horses.”

“ And was Tom, groom, your only instructor?”

“ No—Sir Edward Arundel when he was there—he learnt me the prints in them pretty little books he gave me.”

“ And what were they about?”

“ About the Bible—and he used to want me to read in 'em myself—and then when I couldn't, he told 'em me—I liked that.”

Surely, thought Sophia, I have greatly mistaken this man! or ‘sweet have been the uses of adversity’ to him!

As she went on questioning the little girl, she saw cause to shudder, indeed,

at all the mischiefs to which she had been exposed, as well as much room for gratitude to Sir Edward, who had so kindly brought her away.

With a consciousness of more goodwill than she had yet borne him, she was hastening to get ready for the Priory breakfast, where she expected to find him, when a message came from Mrs. Villars to inform her that he was gone.

Surprised, and not very well pleased, she now delayed her purpose to a later hour; before which, however, matters had again assumed a different aspect.

Sir Edward had ridden to Andover, and stopped there in the expectation of his chaise following him, and taking him another stage that evening of the road he was pursuing. Having waited for it in vain, he remained where he was; and when the lad appeared with it in the morning, he inquired with some displeasure into the cause of delay.

Will pleaded his claim to forgiveness

on the score of its being the first offence of the kind he had ever committed, and he said, "as it was all along o' drinking Madam Delmere's health he had been a little overtaken, he hoped his honour would be pleased to overlook it."

"And why Mrs. Delmere's health in particular?" Sir Edward asked, rather struck with the look that accompanied these words.

"I don't know your honour—maphap on account o' my being your servant like—I hope no offence—"

"What has your being my servant to do with drinking Mrs. Delmere's health?"

Delighted to have his tongue set loose (for the melancholy that had seized upon Sir Edward had precluded all unnecessary communication, even with his own valet, which was the reason of his total ignorance of the reports so authoritatively circulated in the neighbourhood of the Priory) Will now proceeded to inform his master of all he had been told ;

in confidence, indeed ; but that the ‘potations deep,’ which had deprived him of the use of his limbs, had also obliterated from his memory ; and he ended with saying, “ All the servants was a looking for the second year of Madam Delmere’s mourning being up like, for the marriage ceremony ; seeing they was sure as madam would never go for to lay by her affliction for the Colonel, till her two years was fairly out, because she were so much more worser in her grief, nor widow ladies be now a-days ; and that was what made her so mortal mad with Mamosel when she axed her about it like.”

Sir Edward was confounded. — Will proceeded to petition for being her ladyship’s body coachman like.”

But his master, who had suffered him to run on, merely from being too much engrossed by his agitation to think of stopping him, now angrily interrupted his speech, with a peremptory command

to let him hear no more of such nonsense, and dismissing Will, he betook himself to ruminate upon what he had heard.

Here, then, was the solution of the Priory cottage door having been shut against him! so far from caprice it had been the most laudable attention to propriety that had actuated her! the gossiping neighbourhood had misconstrued his visits—and he!—good God! he had been the unconscious means of injuring her fair fame; so far at least as bringing the consistency and sincerity of her grief into question. Good God! he to do her such a wrong! what could possibly be done to repair it?—

For now that all idea of her original ill treatment was completely set aside, he could not but severely reproach himself with the displeasure to which he had given way—indeed it soon became very clear that her mixing with that gay circle could only be with a view to counteract the impression of her being accessible to him

alone—her breaking away from him as she had done, was probably to be ascribed to the same cause! and judiciously calculated to show, that their intercourse referred entirely to Agatha. His own strange conduct now stared him in the face! what must she, who ever made propriety her first consideration, think of his flying off as he had done?—Think of it!—she might not know it!—how lucky he had gone no farther than Andover!—it was but remounting his horse and returning to the Priory, and by general attention to the family efface the impression of any thing particular being meant to her.—Nay, if it could answer that purpose, it might even be well to ask to be introduced to the Belmonts—his health was so different to what it had of late been, that he found himself quite equal to any sacrifice that consideration for Delmere's widow might require.

Accordingly, he ordered his horse

forthwith; bid Will stay where he was with the chaise, till his return; and rode back with all speed to the Priory.

He re-appeared there just as the riding party had been arranged for the morning, by all the young set in council assembled, and the horses were leading to the door. Apologising to Mrs. Villars for his abrupt retreat of the preceding evening, he ascribed it to the unequal state of his spirits, but declared himself so conscious of the rudeness he had committed, that he could not rest satisfied without making his personal excuses—said something civil about having formerly had the honour of being slightly known to Mr. and Miss Belmont, and his wish to avail himself of it to obtain their introduction of him to Lord and Lady Belmont.

All this was so much more extraordinary than his behaviour of the last evening, as to create general surprise, and admit of various interpretations, according to the wishes or previous opinions of the company.

Laura saw a favourable omen to herself in it; for concluding him apprised that Sophia did not yet visit at the Park, the compliment could have no reference to her, she thought. With much readiness she therefore answered for the pleasure Lord and Lady Belmont would have in making his acquaintance, and invited him to join the party that had just engaged to spend the evening with them.

To this proposal he acceded, with unusual graciousness, not doubting Sophia's being included; he was now also invited to join the riders; but as Mrs. Delmere was not likely to be one of them, he thought he had done enough, and begged to be excused.

As they rode off, Mrs. Delmere with Agatha in her hand, appeared in the opposite direction, and experienced no slight surprise on seeing Sir Edward come forward to meet her; but quickly satisfying herself that there had only been some mistake in the supposition of his depar-

ture, she advanced towards him with a look of sweetness and complacency perfectly enchanting.

Agatha, with whom he was now become a great favourite, ran forward with a hop, step, and jump, and throwing her arms about his neck, gave him a hearty kiss.

"I conclude, Sir Edward has been used to these violent attacks on your part, Agatha, or you would have frightened him!" said Sophia.

"No; I learnt that of Betsy—she always did so when her dad came home."

"When you go back to Rock Castle, then, I hope you will teach her better."

"Why, am I going back?" with an alarmed air.

"I hope not, for some time to come," replied her aunt, casting a look of apprehensive interrogation on Sir Edward.

"Not, I dare say, till Mrs. Delmere has had full time to instruct you how to improve the manners there, instead of

copying them," he returned with a smile, which quite set Sophia's heart at rest upon the subject.

Mrs. Villars soon took the child away with her, and Sir Edward then hastened to tell Mrs. Delmere, that she was likely to retain undisturbed possession for a year or two; as Mr. Arundel proposed passing the ensuing summer between his two other estates; of which one lay in Scotland, and the other in the West of England; and he had very little doubt, after what had occurred in the present visit, of persuading him to admit a governess of Mrs. Delmere's choice, which would avert much mischief when he should again lay claim to his granddaughter.

Sir Edward dwelt with complacency on one circumstance in this visit, which had proved consonant to Mrs. Delmere's wishes. Mr. Arundel's intention of keeping Agatha ignorant of her great expect-

tations from him, until she should be of age, if he lived so long.

This was, indeed, an unexpected coincidence, which equally soothed and gratified her.

The conversation was so interesting, and he exerted so much ingenuity in prolonging it, that Sophia had no notion of the time it had continued, till the return of the riding party drew her attention to the hour; she then with great simplicity, expressed her surprise at having been beguiled into forgetfulness of an appointment she had made at home; and seeing Agatha at that moment come out of the house with Katty, she called the child, and somewhat abruptly walked away with her.

Sir Edward looked disconcerted by the suddenness of her departure; Laura Belmont riding up to him, said, "Was it alarm at our approach that drove the fair recluse so precipitately back to her cell?"

Sir Edward's late habits and opinions had been so adverse to gallantry, that he was not very ready with an unmeaning civil speech — so muttering something unintelligible, which he hoped might pass for such, he unpolitely enough moved away from her.

Laura, before disturbed at the tête à tête, was now piqued at the apparent rudeness, and addressing herself to Katty, observed, "They seemed in such earnest conversation, as we caught a glimpse of them in coming down the hill, that I fear we may have unseasonably interrupted it."

"Dear bless you! no, their conversation must have been out and out again, by the time it has lasted—for my niece Delmere came just as you were setting off, and I've been keeping little Agg from interrupting them this hour past."

"That was kind, Mrs. Katharine; you probably concluded, then, that matters of deeper interest were on the *tapis* than

what related to Agatha?" returned Laura, with a very penetrating look.

"Why, as to that, Miss Belmont, I am not in their secrets, you see; so I can tell no tales; but they have my hearty good wishes notwithstanding—so I shall say no more," replied the discreet Katty.

She had said enough to satisfy Laura however, who suddenly rode after her party to conceal her mortification.

Mrs. Villars had been backwards and forwards during the conversation between her daughter and Sir Edward; but happened to be out of the way when Sophia went; by which means she had missed securing her return to dinner. Katty became a most willing messenger upon the occasion, but, as it sometimes happened, she did not prove a successful one; for she was so full of her allusions to the 'morning's confab,' as she called it, that they drew Sophia's attention to the construction it might give rise to with

others; and she positively refused to meet Sir Edward at dinner.

Katty was provoked beyond all bounds; and when Sir Edward, on setting down to table, expressed his disappointment at Mrs. Delmere's absence—her displeasure broke forth.

“I'll assure you, Sir Edward, I am as much disappointed as you can be—and I can't say but what I am angry into the bargain, for I expounded every argument I could think of to convince her—”

“My dear sister,” interrupted Mrs. Villars, “you must make allowance for her unwillingness to leave her darling the first day of her return.”

“My patience! why what was to hinder her bringing her with her, you know! besides, she didn't say a word about that—it was all because of the nonsense—”

Emily colouring to her very finger-ends, with dread of what was coming, hoped to turn the tide of her aunt's thoughts by suddenly breaking into her

speech with an inquiry into the contents of the covered dish before her, and desiring to be helped to it.

But this only effected a momentary respite ; the subject had too strong possession of Katty's mind, and she resumed, " That nonsense you know—"

Mr. Villars happening for once to be alive to what was going forward, abruptly, and with some emphasis, said, " I think Katty, my daughter may have the privilege of accepting or declining our invitations—they are not issued with the royal stamp of a command !

" No, to be sure, brother," replied the impenetrable Katty, " only in this case, you know, all proper pains has been taken to demonstrate—"

" I'll tell you what, Katty," rather angrily, though wishing to turn it off in pleasantry ; " leave demonstration to philosophers, and let women be content to 'eat their pudding and hold their tongue.' "

Katty, half frightened, though wholly unconscious of what could provoke her brother's displeasure, was, however, awed into silence ; but Sir Edward had caught enough of her meaning to show him, that this refusal of Sophia's was of a piece with his being denied admittance at the cottage ; and her nice regard to propriety challenged his utmost approbation. She had treated him with frank and flattering confidence in the morning—she had evidently been pleased with many of his opinions—but he clearly perceived that nothing could induce her to brave the animadversions of the world, which ought to be the ruling principle in every truly feminine mind. His admiration of her increased every hour.

Sir Edward formed his judgments of her with a true lover-like blindness, lending all his own delicacies to the admired object. Sophia was but too apt to set the opinion of the world at defiance, where it at all interfered with her

own—and had certainly done more that morning, towards confirming the reports in circulation, by her inadvertence to the hours that had passed in their *tete-a-tete*, than could have arisen from her dining at her father's, where she now so frequently spent the day. However, between his disappointment and his satisfaction, his regrets and his admiration, and above all the prospect of seeing her in the evening, Sir Edward was restored to a state of animation; that made him highly agreeable to the whole family.

When it appeared from the inquiries made after Mrs. Delmere at the Park, that she had not yet visited there—the sense of disappointment was again counteracted by Sir Edward's approval of her consistency; and he said with energy to Emily, “There is a dignified propriety about Mrs. Delmere, that must command the highest respect and admiration of every thinking mind!”

Laura overheard him, and determined

to remove this impression at least, ere long.

When the card-table was placed, Sir Edward readily agreed to cut in, to relieve himself from the necessity of conversing with Laura and Lady Sabina ; for Charles had drawn Henry and Emily to a distance, to look into a new publication—and Lord Belmont had engaged Lord Leonard in some political question, which they were discussing as they walked up and down the room.

Lady Sabina, after tossing about her shoemaking implements for some time, without finding what she said she wanted, betook herself to her solitaire board ; and Laura contrived to draw her embroidering frame so forward between the card-table and the work-table, as to be equally audible to both ; and then, seizing upon a moment of perfect silence, she said to Sabina, affecting an under tone, as if wishing not to be heard, “What an intolerable mope your brother is become, ever

since Sir Tristram Traverse's introduction of him to our fair recluse!"

"Yes, he's over head and ears!" was the careless reply. "I shall never get them all off this way—yes—I never saw him seriously in love before!"

Laura was aware her end was answered, for Sir Edward immediately renounced. Unwilling Lady Sabina should say any more, she called to Charles, to bring the book to the work-table, reproaching him with the unfairness of keeping it all to themselves.

"Pray move your work-table to them," said Lady Belmont, "if you are going to read—we can't tell what we are about as it is—Sir Edward Arundel has just given away the odd trick and lost me the rubber."

Sir Edward pleaded his having so long lost sight of cards, and begged he might cut out—which he accordingly did.

Here was an overthrow of all his high-wrought veneration!—Sir Tristram Tra-

verse!—one of the most trifling!—most contemptible of fashionable profligates! not only acquainted—but on a footing of sufficient intimacy to introduce Lord Leonard!—”

His reverie was interrupted by an appeal from Lord Belmont, on the subject under discussion between him and Lord Leonard. Sir Edward gave an answer so wide of the mark, as convinced them his thoughts were otherwise employed—his eye was anxiously bent upon Henry, watching his laying down the book to draw him away, in the hope of obtaining some elucidation of this harassing discovery.

But ere the book was well closed, Lord Leonard had seized upon Henry's arm, and taken him into the adjoining apartment. Emily might certainly satisfy his curiosity as well—and he took the vacant seat next her; but he could not please himself in giving a sufficiently

disinterested form to his question, to guard his motive from her penetration—so he sat silent and abstracted.

Laura saw the mischief work, and triumphed in her success.

Conscious, at length, of his inability, either to converse or obtain the information he wanted, he asked Emily in a whisper, “Whether he should be deemed guilty of rudeness if he walked home? finding himself unwell.”

“By no means—politeness is too well understood in this house, for ceremony to exist with it,” was her reply; and Sir Edward slipped away; determined to wait no longer than the following morning, for a solution from Henry of what so strongly militated against the consistency he had so highly prized.

But Henry had agreed to go out shooting with Lord Leonard and Charles Belmont, and was off by day-break.

He had now but one resource, and at

the breakfast table, Sir Edward hesitatingly ventured to name Sir Tristram Traverse, as understanding him to be an acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Villars.

“ They could scarcely consider him as such—he had indeed dined there, but merely as one of Lord and Lady Kingsborough’s party.”

“ Mrs. Delmere’s acquaintance with him was probably of longer date,” Sir Edward said.

“ Mrs. Delmere has no acquaintance with him at all.” Mrs. Villars replied ; for the story of the wager had been suppressed at the Priory by Henry’s desire, knowing the vexation it would occasion to his mother ; so that, except the adventure of the dog as reported by Katty, nothing was known there upon the subject.

This denial was too much !—Here was an evident deception !—Good heaven !—could it indeed be that he was again in

danger of becoming a dupe to female art ! For he had, in various occurrences of the foregoing day, seen cause to suspect himself of sentiments somewhat verging towards that passion he had so solemnly forsworn ; nor had he felt all the alarm that might have been expected from the discovery whilst the object was so pre-eminent : but now !—merciful powers ! he could not break away too soon, from the snare he saw spread around him ! for busy thought quickly reverted to Katty's admonitions betrayed by Agatha.—What mattered it how far Mrs. Delmere might or might not be privy to that idea ? since it was now but too evident, that while she was acting the inconsolable, and affecting to lead a life of perfect seclusion, she admitted the profligate Sir Tristram to introduce to her a companion, who by the very circumstance of their intimacy must naturally be supposed as great a profligate as himself.

As these thoughts passed in rapid succession through his mind, his darkened brow bore testimony to their agitating nature ; but inequality of spirits was so readily accounted for in him, that no surprise was occasioned by the haste in which he called for his horses, and disappeared the moment breakfast was over.

As he was mounting his horse, Katty was just returning from the cottage with Agatha, who had Mrs. Delmere's dog in her arms.

Running towards him, she cried, " Here's Pompey, Sir Edward ! see, here's Pompey !—did you ever see such a beauty ? and do you know poor aunty would have lost him if it hadn't been for such a good-natured gentleman, that brought him back !"

" Aye !" said Katty, " I'm sure I shall love that Sir Tristram the longest day I have to live, if it was for nothing else but his kindness in bringing back that little dog."

“Good morning to you, ma’am!”
said Sir Edward abruptly, and galloped
off, triumphant over his own weakness.
All was now as clear as day-light—And
‘Richard was himself again.’

CHAP. XVI.

WHILE Sir Edward Arundel was enjoying his fortunate escape, Lord Leonard Ormsby was entangling himself in his own toils, for assuredly Sophia was innocent of all intention to ensnare him. Not a day passed without his contriving some means of throwing himself into her way ; she had occasionally suffered herself to be drawn into the rides and walks of the youthful set, and Lord Leonard never failed to drop in *accidentally* at the Priory, whenever she was there ; but the cottage remained inaccessible, and to Belmont Park she still refused to go.

When the time came for the departure of the visitors, Lord Leonard with an aching heart consulted Henry upon the possible means of keeping up some intercourse with the family till the period of Sophia's emerging from her seclusion, should authorize his tender of himself and fortune to her acceptance, without danger of offence to the delicacy and propriety of her feelings.

Henry, anxiously wishing to beguile his sister of her grief, by so eligible a second choice, entered warmly into his views ; and with the concurrence of Mr. and Mrs. Villars, invited him to spend his Christmas at the Priory, engaging in the meanwhile to use his best endeavours to draw her speedily back into that world she was so calculated to adorn.

Laura had succeeded so much beyond her hopes, in driving off Sir Edward, that she saw Lord Leonard slipping through her fingers with tolerable composure, resolved to apply herself during the re-

mainder of her stay in the country to turning the whole force of her artillery upon Henry Villars.

Lord Belmont had no sooner parted with his guests, than he sent for his son into his library.

Charles obeyed the summons with eager step and a beating heart; it was the very thing he was about to solicit, in the hope of obtaining his father's sanction to his love.

"I have sent for you, Charles, with a view which I should think you must have anticipated," Lord Belmont began, "although you have thought proper to keep aloof from that concurrence in my wish, which might have been expected by such a father, as I believe I have proved myself to you."

"I have most anxiously been waiting for an opportunity of unbosoming myself to you, my dear father, trusting to your long experienced kindness—"

"I do not like your exordium, sir,"

—Heart, you see, is here wholly out of the question.”

“ Too surely, I see heart is out of the question indeed !”

“ None of your sarcasms, sir !—a less indulgent parent than myself might tell you, *you* can have no heart who show yourself insensible to beauty and perfections so unrivalled as those of Lady Sabina, and insist upon your devoting yourself wholly to her ; but I treat you as my friend—I lay before you the means of increasing your father’s consequence and happiness, and leave you to dispose of your heart as you may see fit.”

“ Good God, my lord ! could I be such a villain as to attempt to retain the affection of Emily Villars, whilst I gave my hand to another ?”

“ Don’t misconstrue my words, sir ; I am not urging you to do any such thing. A boyish passion is easily subdued when the effort is seriously made—*that* is what I expect of you !—absence will facilitate

the matter. Go abroad as you had agreed to do, and your thoughts will soon be weaned from Miss Villars; and then—do as your father has done before you! I offer you no mean example. Do you imagine I had any predilection for Lady Belmont, when I married her? and you see how respectably we have gone on.”

The distress of Charles was inexpressible! never could he have conceived his father to be so utterly destitute of principle and feeling, as he now found him—and it steeled his resistance.

“I cannot be induced, my lord, to act a part from which my whole soul recoils, whatever example I might have to plead; every feeling of my heart is Emily Villars’s; and so devoted—I cannot give my hand to Lady Sabina Ormsby.” This was spoken with a firmness that surprised Lord Belmont.

“Are you aware, sir, of the consequences of this refusal?”

“I am aware of being wholly in my

father's power as to fortune—but I shall not be biassed by such a consideration."

"Romantic fool! oh! what have I done to be cursed with such a son?" and he gave way to an emotion that astonished Charles, who had never before seen him thrown out of the studied coolness of his character. It affected him to tears, and he exclaimed, "O my father! say not so! call me not a curse! command me in any sacrifice but this! and see the alacrity with which I will obey you."

"Ridiculous!" somewhat recovering himself, "command you in any thing but that on which my political existence—which in other words is to say my life, depends. — Excuse my blindness, most dutiful sir, in not rating the compliment to the height you seem to intend—but be assured, in return, that in every matter of perfect indifference you shall also find me a most conceding father."

"O my lord! you cannot—indeed you cannot see how my heart is torn, or

you would not treat me with such severe irony!"

"Well, Charles!" resumed Lord Belmont, in a more conciliating tone, after a pause of some length, "I see we must come to a compromise. I will agree to leave the matter as it is, for the present; provided you go to the continent for six months, without forming any previous engagement with Miss Villars; and at your return, we will reconsider the question."

Warding off the immediate difficulty, seemed to Charles so great a point gained, that he readily acquiesced in the proposal; which the insidious politician only made to gain time, well aware of his son's too pliable nature; upon which, indeed, he had relied rather too much in this abrupt opening of the business; but which he well knew judicious management had never failed to bend to his purpose.

"One condition I annex to my present forbearance," Lord Belmont added,

“that Miss Villars be not informed of the conversation we have now had.”

“Miss Villars is aware, my lord, that I only waited an opportunity of opening my heart to you!—”

“I repeat, sir,” interrupting him, “that my adherence to the compromise depends upon your honourably fulfilling this condition.”

Charles bowed submissive, and left the room.

Distressed and perplexed, he shut himself into his own apartment, to deliberate upon what might best be done; to venture upon infringing the condition, was too hazardous after his father's threat!—to see Emily, and conceal any thing from her, was so disingenuous—so unlike his former conduct—so out of his power; in short, he could not think of it. He struck out a medium—Laura was Emily's friend—through her, enough might be imparted, to show he had spoken with doubtful success—and that his father's

final determination would only be obtained at his return from the continental excursion, which was now again urged upon him ; in addition to which, Laura should be charged to renew his vows of eternal constancy, &c. and of Lady Sabina not a word.—

And having settled this in the best way he could devise, he came to the resolution of proceeding immediately to London, with a view of still catching two of the party, with whom he had before engaged, and whose departure had been delayed.

Laura entered into his feelings with every testimony of the deepest interest ; engaged to repeat all he could wish, and more ; professed the warmest attachment to Emily, “ who certainly,” she said, “ was amiable to a degree ; and had moreover the advantage of being his first love, which naturally accounted for what, under other circumstances, might have appeared rather surprising.”

“What was that?”

“Your total inattention, not only to Lady Sabina’s pre-eminent beauty and accomplishments, but to the evident partiality with which she seemed to view you.”

“Partiality to me, Laura!” with a look of astonishment, “I don’t think we exchanged a dozen sentences, beyond what common civility required, during the whole time she was here.”

“I did not accuse you of having flirted with her, brother—I know you are incapable of it—you evinced your partiality for Emily but too clearly—I only wish it had produced the effect it ought to have done!”

“Surely, Laura, you must dream!—Lady Sabina appeared to me as perfectly indifferent to any thing I said or did, as to every thing else around her.”

“To every thing else around her, I grant you—but be it so!—let it pass as my dream—I ought in strict propriety

to have suppressed all allusion to the subject.—So now give me my lesson for Emily accurately, that there, at least, I may say neither more nor less than just the thing I ought.”

The lesson was repeated over and over again, with reiterated vows of eternal—unchangeable affection at every close; and Laura having engaged for the most scrupulous fidelity in her repetition of it all, Charles left her to seek his father, and impart his determination of setting out immediately.

Nothing could be more consonant to Lord Belmont's views; he embraced his son with unusual warmth; gave him unlimited power to draw upon him during his tour; and taking him to Lady Belmont's dressing-room to bid her farewell, never lost sight of him, till he saw him fairly off in his post-chaise on the London road.

Laura lost no time in acquitting herself of as much as she thought proper

to transmit of her brother's commission ; which she accompanied with all the expressions of sympathy and regret suitable to the occasion.

Emily testified deep feeling—but no surprise. “ I was not unprepared,” she said, “ for Lord Belmont's dissenting from his son's choice ; and from his general way of thinking, there can be little room for hope that he should relinquish any views of his own in favour of his son's wishes.”

“ But Charles bid me assure you over and over again, that no consideration should make him recede from his engagement to you.”

“ There exists no engagement to me, Laura, but in your brother's own heart ; and I should be unworthy of the opinion he has formed of me, if I could take advantage of it to his prejudice.”

“ There is no saying,” Laura replied, “ how far affection for his now only son may soften my father's heart.—”

“ My dear friend,” interrupted Emily, “ I perceive your tender concern for me, makes you desirous of softening this stroke ; but depend upon it, we do not know the worst—his going away without seeing me, convinces me he was afraid of betraying what would give me pain,” (for Laura had carefully concealed the prohibition which sealed Charles’s lips). “ But he does not know,” continued the generous girl, “ how firm I can be for the benefit of those I love—for Charles is very dear to me, Laura.—I don’t deny that,”—a burst of tears now relieved her full heart.

“ Dear, dear girl ! how you distress me !” exclaimed Laura, putting up her handkerchief to conceal the want of tears, which she imagined Emily would expect to flow in sympathy with hers.

But Emily’s mind was engrossed with her own honest purpose. “ Be assured,” she added, as soon as she could recover herself, “ that I will be no cause of dis-

union in your family!—I will set your brother the example of submission to whatever may be his father's will."

"Sweetest Emily!—what heroism!—oh that poor Lady Sabina could emulate it!"

This was thrown out, as an additional stimulus to Emily's romantic flights, as the worldly-minded Laura deemed them. She might have saved herself the trouble—it passed unnoticed—Emily's guiding principle was far beyond Laura's ken; her thoughts were at that moment addressed to the Being from whom she ever sought support—and after a short silence, she said, "Will you forgive me, dear Laura, if I retire to my own room, to seek the calmness I wish to recover, before I make my mother acquainted with what you have imparted?"

"Your mother!" repeated Laura in some dismay, "what occasion is there to acquaint your mother?"

“ My mother is as myself—I have no reserves for her.”

“ Only take care she do not embroil matters, by unseasonable interference,” said Laura, fearful her own part in the affair might either be betrayed to her father, or her duplicity to Charles; “ you know my father is so tenacious—”

“ Trust to my mother’s dignified forbearance, dear Laura!—she will seek to strengthen her daughter’s mind, but not to force her upon any family.”

Laura laughed in her sleeve at both mother and daughter, and with a tender embrace bid her beloved friend adieu.

CHAP. XVII.

LORD Belmont on the following morning summoned his daughter into his library.

“ Laura !” he began, “ I think your friend Emily stood the test of rivalry with the beautiful Sabina—she was not overlooked,—” he added, with a scrutinizing glance.

Laura had a delicate game to play—she was upon her guard. “ Emily had probably no idea of coming into competition.” She said.

“ Are young women apt to think little of themselves ?”

“ I believe Emily’s humility to be real, my lord.”

"Aye, no doubt—she is your friend, and therefore all perfection—so your brother also thinks, I presume."

Laura was silent.

"Very cautious, Laura!—possibly bound by the sacred tie of confidante-ship?" ironically.

"I know of no tie that should prevent my answering any question you choose to put, my lord."

"As to your brother, the matter is plain enough; but answer me candidly: is the girl desperately in love with Charles?"

"She certainly does not attempt to disguise her partiality for him."

"Partiality!—that's the delicate female term, is it? for the forward advances of an ambitious girl grasping at an establishment above her pretensions!"

Laura was as desirous of foiling any pretensions of Emily's as her father could be; but very unwilling to be committed in the affair, both on account of Charles

and Henry. She now perceived she might safely leave it in her father's hands, and abide by her supposed friendship. "Surely Emily cannot be taxed with forwardness of manners!"

"Well! we won't discuss that at present—I am willing to allow for the blindness of friendship, and there was a time that I might have seen the connexion in a different light; but the death of Augustus has made so important a change in the situation of Charles, as must supersede individual partialities. He now becomes a public man, you know."

"But would not my friend's charms and qualifications do credit to any situation?"

"Divest yourself of prepossession, Laura; and say, whether she can *really* be put into competition as a daughter-in-law with Lady Sabina Ormsby!"

"Lady Sabina Ormsby!" with a scream of surprise; "can there, indeed, be such an alternative for Charles?"

“ Neither more nor less than the Marquis of Kingsborough’s daughter !—Lady Sabina Ormsby’s hand actually courts your brother’s acceptance ; and he is so insensible both to his interest and his duty as to hold back !”

“ The world, to be sure, cannot be expected to see with his eyes, or with *mine* !”

“ The world could deem it little short of madness ; and I should conceive that you, Laura, would not make your brother’s true interests, and the advantage of your family, subservient to a silly girlish friendship, which is never considered as any thing more than a name to cover a confession of reciprocal follies. I expect a very different estimate of duties from you !”

“ Indeed, my lord, I must acquit my friend of meriting any such accusation ; nothing like folly ever fell from her lips.”

“ Not what romantic girls may call so,

perhaps ; she abounds in sentimentality, no doubt !”

“ I have heard her express the most generous disinterested sentiments.”

“ Aye—they are easily enough expressed ; but would she act upon them, think you ?”

“ I have heard her assert, that true love can inspire strength to make any sacrifice to the happiness of its object.”

“ Assertions cost nothing.”

“ I cannot doubt her sincerity, if brought to the proof.”

“ Upon this ground, Laura, it would be an act of friendship in you to put this boasted magnanimity to the test, by pointing out to her the advantages that would result to the object of her disinterested attachment.”

“ Who, me, my lord !—her friend !—try her so cruelly !”

“ You think then she would shrink from the test !”

“ ’Tis I who shrink from it—I could not command my feelings—I might betray!”

“ True enough; you might betray what would defeat—Well, you have, however, given me an insight into her character, which raises her in my estimation; and I hope I shall find her deserving of the high opinion you have formed of her. I will save you from all irksome interference—but upon condition, Laura, that what has now passed between us, be not even surmised—the slightest indiscretion on your part, would provoke a displeasure you are little aware of.”

Laura promised the most rigid adherence to the injunction.

And so ended, between the father and daughter, this agreeable specimen of ‘ *ruse contre ruse*,’ though not of ‘ *guerre ouverte*.’

Lord Belmont was persuaded he had drawn his daughter into furnishing him with data, by which to circumvent her

friend; and Laura was satisfied with having pointed out the mode of proceeding to her father, and made over to him the hazardous task which might have involved her with her brother, and injured her in the opinion of Henry Villars.

While this dialogue was going on at the Park, the artless Emily had laid open her whole generous heart to her mother, and received the most unqualified approbation of her sentiments. Dignity of mind was a predominant feature in the character of Mrs. Villars; and she had imparted it undiminished to her daughters: disinterestedness is its natural concomitant; but blended with these, Emily had that pious humility so beautifully portrayed in her countenance, which suggested to Lady Sabina the appropriate comparison, so frequently misapplied in the world, of the Madona.

She had not been able to go to her mother the evening before, as she had intended upon quitting Laura; the struggle

had proved too severe in the first instance; but a night of uninterrupted meditation—for sleep had not broken into it—produced a calmness of purpose, which, with the additional support of Mrs. Villars's just arguments, now restored her to nearly her wonted serenity of countenance, if not of heart.

She took the earliest opportunity of imparting to Sophia her conversation with Laura; and simply and frankly professed her determination in consequence of it.

Sophia had seen deeper into Laura, than Emily's partiality and ignorance of guile had permitted her to do; her manoeuvres with Lady Sabina, as well as with Henry, had not escaped Mrs. Delmere; she had observed her manners differ according to the company she was in; she thought she could detect some sinister purpose in the present communication—some trick to part Emily and Charles.

"I think, Emily, you are premature in such strong determinations!" she said.

"Can I hesitate a moment, Sophia, when his advantage is in question?"

"What proof have you that it is?"

"Laura could not deny the interpretation I put upon his going away without seeing me."

"Laura *did not* deny it certainly—how far she *could not*, may be another point."

"Can you suspect her of want of friendship?"

"In very truth, Emily, I do not confide in her sincerity; the adulatory court I saw her pay to Lady Sabina Ormsby disgusted me; and if in Lord Belmont's withheld consent there be any covert plan of gaining time for drawing Charles's affections to Lady Sabina, Laura, depend upon it, would be an active agent in the business."

"Dearest Sophia! affection for me, makes you unjust to her—there can be no grounds for taxing her with duplicity!"

—at any rate, however, supposing Lord Belmont to have such views, can I ever come into competition?”

“Perhaps not, in the eyes of the ambitious Lord Belmont!—but surely Charles would be unworthy of your affection, if the temptation of such worldly advantage could induce him to forego the object of his tenderest and first love!”

“I believe he will not readily resign me—but it is for me to set him the example.”

“Good heaven, Emily! of what?—of sacrificing the first blessings of life to the paltry consideration of rank and fortune?”

“No, Sophia!—but of filial submission.”

“Consider what a parent, and what a man, Lord Belmont is!”

“He is Charles Belmont’s father.”

“You owe him no submission as such.”

“Not at this moment—in my present

situation ; but how could I reconcile myself to becoming his daughter, by concurring in his son's disobedience, and introducing discord into his family."

" Dear Emily ! this is surely too fastidious."

" It is what my principles suggest—and I have no other rule of action."

" So you will devote the man you love to wretchedness, for the sake of an unprincipled, unfeeling father ?"

" Not for the sake of the father, Sophia !—but for the sake of the son's domestic happiness—they are an affectionate united family, and I could never make him amends for all that he would forego."

" But that turns upon the strength of his passion for you ; if he prefers you to all that his family, or the world have to offer, then—"

" Then," Emily broke in, " I should forfeit my claim to his love by the very acceptance of the sacrifice. I believe

his preference for me to be founded on his opinion of my character and principles; and if they could become subservient to my passions, instead of being their guide, must it not sink me in his esteem? and without that, of what value would his love be to me, if, indeed, love can survive esteem in a pure mind such as Charles's."

"And can you possibly suppose that, devoted to you as he appears to be, he can ever find happiness with such a puppet as Lady Sabina?"

"There, again, your partiality to me makes you unjust, dear Sophia; but we assume the intention towards Lady Sabina—we do not know it—all we do know is, that Lord Belmont objects to me, and that is sufficient for me to act upon."

"Emily! is it in nature to be so wildly romantic?"

"You are the romantic person, Sophia, who would sacrifice all to love.—I throw

higher considerations into the scale, filial duty—”

“Oh Emily!” interrupting her, “there is but one consideration that ought to weigh—one perfect happiness in this life!

‘Credi pure à me, che l’ho provato.’”

Tender regrets now crowded upon Sophia’s mind, and she was drowned in tears; but Emily remained unmoved by her arguments, though not by her distress, in which she participated with more feeling than her sister had shown for her in this discussion.

Not that the severe test to which she had put Emily’s firmness, arose from a want of sensibility, but of consideration. Sophia had ever acted upon the doctrine she preached; energetic, enthusiastic, but infirm of purpose, from being too easily led by her feelings only. She was eminently deficient in that unerring light which illumined the pious mind of her

sister, and ever kept her steady in action as wise in determination.

Had Colonel Delmere lived, Sophia might have seen full cause to rue the self-confidence and pertinacity with which she had overpowered her parent's reluctance to consent to her union. His bravery and devotion to her, blinded her better judgment; and his heroic end prolonged the delusion, and saved her from the mortifying discovery of the laxity of principle that had marked his conduct before their union; for, however strongly he had expressed himself, and felt for his sister's disgrace, he was but one instance more among the many who do not scruple to carry that dishonour into the family of others, which they will sacrifice their lives to avenge in their own.

CHAP. XVIII.

It was with some surprise that Emily found Lord Belmont prepared to be of the riding party, when she and Henry called for Laura the next day.

They had not gone far, before Laura exclaimed, "What delightful turf for a canter!" and set off with Henry at full speed.

"I have so seldom mounted my horse of late," said Lord Belmont, "that I shall confine myself to my butter-and-egg trot, if this pace be not irksome to you, Miss Villars."

"Not in the least, my lord."

“ To tell you the truth, Miss Villars, I had a view to the pleasure of a *tete-a-tete* with you in joining the party this morning, when I found your sister was not to be of it.”

Emily bowed her head, in silent expectation of what was to follow.

“ I apprehend you may have been somewhat surprised at the sudden departure of my son for his continental tour, after it had been apparently relinquished.”

“ I was, my lord.”

“ You certainly, Miss Villars, were entitled to a very full *exposé* of his motives—and indeed I should have expected it from the natural frankness of his character ; but we sometimes find ourselves entangled in unforeseen difficulties—and a reluctance to give pain, may injudiciously close our lips, when openness ought to have been deemed an imperious duty—”

“ I believe, my lord, Mr. Belmont knows

me too well, to doubt of my firmness in hearing whatever communication he might have had to make."

"Possibly it might be the agitation of his own mind, in finding his present duties at war with all his former prepossessions—of *yours*, Miss Villars, *there* can be but one opinion; it is made up of nature's choicest materials—and in any conflict to which you might be exposed, there could be little doubt of the issue."

"Your lordship does me honour, I hope I shall not fall short upon trial."

"My son, I believe, Miss Villars, paid that tribute to your charms, which he must have had neither eyes nor heart to have withheld."

"Will your lordship forgive my taking the liberty to interrupt compliments so very unnecessary and so much above my desert, by the frank avowal of the partiality with which Mr. Belmont has honoured me, and my own grateful sense of it—but no engagement had taken place between

us, that need have raised the smallest difficulty on his part, to inform me of his father's disapprobation ; for this is what I apprehend your lordship is leading to—and I am quite prepared to meet it."

" Disapprobation ! is a word that can never be applied to Miss Villars by *me* at least—there was, indeed, a time, when my most hearty concurrence would even have outstripped the application for it—but the change in Charles's situation—the importance of which his services may be to his country, by the increased political consequence of his family—"

" I entreat you to say no more, my lord ! it is quite sufficient for me to know that Mr. Belmont's duties separate us—true happiness can only be found in the conscientious fulfilment of them ; and his happiness has ever, in my mind, superseded the consideration of my own."

" Spoken like the generous disinterested woman I expected to find when I entered upon this distressing topic," ex-

claimed Lord Belmont, gratified beyond his hopes, and laughing like his daughter in his unfeeling soul, at the silly girl whose romantic nonsense blinded her so completely to the advantages she was relinquishing.

“May I trouble you, my lord,” resumed Emily, “since Mr. Belmont has not appeared to place the same dependance upon my way of thinking, to inform him that I earnestly conjure him to act up to his duty in every respect; and that, to hear of the happiness I shall ever pray may be his, will be my highest gratification through life. And now, with your leave, I will endeavour to overtake Laura and my brother,” added poor Emily, who had exerted herself almost beyond her own power; for, added to the severe trial of fortitude in this formal renunciation of Charles, she deeply felt his supposed distrust of her generosity in leaving such a communication to be made to her by others.

Lord Belmont had succeeded beyond his expectation ; and however he might smile at what he deemed Emily's folly, he could not, upon reflection, but feel surprise and admiration of the superior mind that could in one and the same moment, with such frank simplicity, avow the attachment, and so disinterestedly relinquish the object of it. This actually was beyond what he had believed to exist either in man or woman ; but it made no change in his plans.

He now conceived that a very trifling deviation in stating this conversation to Charles, might convert disinterestedness into apparent indifference, which would pique his pride, as well as disappoint his tenderness, and be a very probable means of turning his thoughts to Lady Sabina. He lost no time, therefore, in making the communication. But it did not exactly produce the result looked for.

The indifference dwelt upon, was so very unlike the sentiments which the

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He naturally avowed
 that the evidence proved its own
 truth, and said this could not
 be doubted the whole
 of the world give no credit to any
 man who should hear from her
 that she was direct; and the de-
 cision of the court having again
 been deferred for one decisive
 moment, and her before setting out
 he had now to impose a
 sentence which not even his
 mind would have wished
 to see her go; but he had seen her
 and he trusted this interview would
 be a great relief to her with regard
 to the case. And he had the cruelty
 to say
 that he was sorry for her assumed
 conversation with him;
 that her coyness was creeping
 on her; though unacknowledged to
 her. Never thinking, how-
 ever, that she was not enough, whilst

any thing remained undone, she acquiesced in the proposal; feeling also that 'the bitterness of death was past,' in what she had already gone through, she strengthened her purpose with the hope of opening Charles's eyes to the call of duty.

But when poor Charles appeared before her, with pallid countenance and anxious looks, she felt the trial would again be more severe than she had foreseen; her awakened sensibility enfeebled her resolution; she had believed him acquiescent in his father's will, and only wanting to be satisfied of her concurrence—she now found that he had relied upon her affection, for assisting his opposition to it—and the task became arduous, beyond what she had yet encountered; for, unconsciously to herself, she had received a degree of support from offended dignity in the idea of his ready dereliction—Laura having designedly omitted the circumstance of the prohibition, and Lord Belmont having artfully suggested a

mortifying motive for his son's having refrained from seeing her.

However, there was no change in Charles's actual duty—and she resolutely resisted her feelings.

He strenuously urged the unfairness as well as unreasonableness of his father's conduct, in having first countenanced their attachment, and then expecting to break it, the moment it no longer suited his views.

Emily contended for filial submission.

“Was there no age of emancipation from it?”

“No age at which the obligations of gratitude ceased,” she thought.

“But surely, at twenty-five, a man might be allowed to judge, and to determine upon what would be most conducive to his own happiness!”

“Have we a right to put happiness before duty, when they are opposed to each other? or rather, can we find happiness in transgressing our duty? can happiness

be obtained at the expence of conscience ?”

“ Emily ! your argument would hold against the contemplation of a wicked purpose ; but here, where I would introduce into my family so bright an example of virtue—of all that is to be admired and loved in a female mind—You would offer a pattern to their imitation, such as—”

“ Would never be imitated—even if I could deserve the encomium you are now passing upon me.—Be assured, examples are never laid to heart that are forced upon any one ; envy and dislike are the natural result.”

“ You could not reason thus coolly, Emily, if you loved as I do !”

“ It is excess of the most disinterested affection, that enables me to combat your arguments, and discern the true road to your happiness, Charles.”

“ Consider to what parents you would have me sacrifice you !”

“ And what shall entitle us to sit in

judgment on our parents? Call to mind the anxious days, the sleepless nights, our infancy and childhood has cost them—the thousand claims to our gratitude long before we can even be sensible of the benefits we receive—‘never can they give your patience greater exercise than you have done theirs ;’ and when we come to those years, which can alone repay the debt, can we feel authorised to throw it off the instant it interferes with our selfish enjoyments ?”

“ You have a right to be enthusiastic on the subject of filial piety, who have such parents as are seldom met with—but do not compare them with mine !”

“ O Charles ! you were conscious of your duties when your heart was open to its own just and natural feelings ; it is your passion that reasons now to mislead you. O trust to those good feelings ! call back your filial piety ! and let me take pride in your virtue, in your noble self-sacrifice,”

“What is there, I would not do, save this—to raise myself in your eyes, Emily?—but to cut myself off from every hope of bliss, by this accursed union with Lady Sabina—”

“Oh Charles!” she exclaimed, concealing her face with her hands—for this was a stroke she had not yet sufficiently prepared her mind for.

“My Emily!—my loveliest Emily! you cannot urge me to such a sacrifice as that!”

“A moment’s time, Charles, to recover myself—I was not quite prepared for this!”

“I am then still dear to you! oh, think of the dreadful misery of a heartless union!”

“Spare me! spare me, Charles!” interrupting him; “respect the weakness I have betrayed! do not degrade me in my own eyes, by attempting to work upon it!”

“Degrade you, Emily! can you consider your love for me as degrading?”

“Do not wilfully misunderstand me, Charles; the degradation is not in the attachment, but in suffering it to mislead me. I cannot at this trying moment urge what I ought; but so much resolution is yet left me, that I can unequivocally declare my own fixed determination—*against your father’s consent I never will be yours*; and now farewell!” she abruptly added, and broke from him before he could recover from the stupefaction into which her last words had thrown him.

As she rushed through the drawing-room, she said, “Dearest mother, go to Charles! he wants soothing.”

Sophia, who had been anxiously awaiting the issue of the conference, perceived she could scarcely utter the words; and followed her to her room, where she threw herself upon her knees, beside her couch, in such a state of emotion as made

her wholly unconscious of her sister's presence.

It was long ere this never-failing restorative produced sufficient effect to enable her to raise her head—and then, the anxious affectionate look with which Sophia sat watching her, brought a burst of tears to her relief—and she threw herself into her sister's arms.

“Dearest Emily! you have over-tasked your self-denying powers, and will fix your own misery for life.”

“No; the struggle is past—but it has been more severe than I expected. I shall soon recover composure now—is he gone?”

“I believe so—I heard my mother just now in the room below, and I think she would not have left him.”

“Then darken the room, and leave me, dear Sophia!—I will lie down for an hour—and you shall see me at dinner as calm as you can wish.”

But poor Emily had over-tasked her

physical powers, if not her mental; for the state of suffering she had for some days experienced produced so much debility, as to cause the present exertion to have brought on an alarming increase of fever; and instead of appearing at dinner, as she had promised her sister, she was confined for that and many following days to her bed.

When Charles returned to the Park he was met by Laura, who expressed much kind solicitude to learn the particulars of what had passed; he was scarcely able to give them, but reproached her for not having imparted to Emily his father's prohibition; he conceived the pain she had expressed at his want of candour and confidence in not having stated to her himself his father's objections, as arising from a feeling of resentment in her breast which had strengthened her resolves against him.

Charles Belmont's mind was inadequate to the full appreciation of

Emily's ; resentment had no influence over it.

Laura excused her want of recollection to impart so material a fact, on the score of her agitation and divided feelings. " For, well as she loved Emily, she must confess she could not help feeling deeply interested also for Lady Sabina."

This premature recurrence to Lady Sabina, did not just then produce its intended effect—his mind was too completely absorbed in his distress ; but as he remained to await Emily's convalescence, his sister's frequently renewed hints at length led him to express wonder at having been so completely blind to what seemed to have been so apparent to others ; for Lord Belmont was not deficient in suggestions to the same effect, though more dexterously guarded than those of his daughter.

Charles having in vain sought to gain over Mrs. Villars and Sophia, to favour his ardent wish for another interview with

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may be compelled to forego
and determined to seek
absence.

Could Lord Belmont have per-
mitted him to turn his thoughts at once
to Sabina, and give up the conti-
nued tour ; but this was so strenuously
opposed, that it became prudent to give
way, lest too great precipitation might
again lose the ground that now appeared
to be gained.

CHAP. XIX.

WHEN Mrs. Villars imparted to her husband the cause of Emily's illness, he was all astonishment. "I really never observed any thing particular between them," he said; "and have always attributed the frequency of Charles Belmont's visits, to my political opinions being more congenial to his own than those of his father."

Mrs. Villars could not forbear a smile. "Do not you recollect my expressing uneasiness to you upon the subject, some time ago, and doubting whether I had not better put Emily upon her guard

before her affections became too deeply engaged?"

"I am very clear *that* was better let alone at any rate—interference only makes bad worse, in most cases; but I protest I can't call to mind any marked attentions on his part—and you know he always asks for a sight of *my* newspaper."

"I wish poor Emily had seen cause to place his visits to that account—her health would not have suffered this severe shock."

"Her health! severe shock! God bless my soul! has she actually made herself seriously ill? Women are so prone to deceive themselves on these subjects! Do, for heaven's sake, let us send off directly for doctor ——." And ringing the bell with great violence, he ordered a man to go on horseback with all speed for the doctor.

Which having done, his thoughts reverted into their habitual channel, and

he returned to the political disquisition in the *Edinburgh Review*, which Mrs. Villars had interrupted ; to which she prudently left him, unwilling to force the matter upon his attention so as to produce a quarrel with Lord Belmont.

Emily's recovery was followed by an apparent calmness, that might have satisfied eyes less observant than those which daily rested anxiously upon her faded cheek and failing appetite. A family council was held, to which the physician was summoned, who recommended her removal into the milder air of Devonshire for the winter.

As yet the fine autumnal weather invited to daily rides, from which salutary effects might be expected ; and which Sophia, with Agatha upon a pony by her side, regularly attended. They were one day suddenly overtaken by a heavy shower, and were wet through before they could reach the shelter of a barn, belonging to a farm-house that lay a

and hoped the ladies might not suffer from their wetting. Her eye fell on Emily as she spoke; and she added, "That young lady did look so delicate she could not help to have fears for her, and must beg to recommend one little cordial, a little *crème de Noyau*!—perhaps English would like better shrub!—indeed, I must hope you will not refuse!"—She continued, as they declined each proposal, "I see the shiver that is beginning of cold."

Emily was indeed chilled, and it was only from unwillingness to give trouble, that they refused the offers, which were, however, persisted in with such evident cordiality as to overcome their scruples, and a little hot wine and water was finally accepted.

"Now one favour more—you will come into our apartment to drink it—my mother will make you good welcome—this little love has won her heart quite."

"Do come, aunty!" cried Agatha,

“she is such a nice old lady!—and talks so funny, you can’t think.”

The stranger led the way to her mother’s apartment, where a venerable, fair-skinned, benevolent-looking woman, of near eighty, sat in an arm-chair, in a coif and pinnars, with a close black dress buttoned up to her chin, and her foot wrapped in flannel, raised upon a stool.

She bowed with her head, and pointed to her foot as an apology for not rising to receive her visitors.

“I have engaged this charming invalid to take some of our wine and hot water, mother, to save her to get cold from being so wet.”

“Hoot Marget! ye maun gar the braw lassie tak a drap Usquebaugh—it ell due her mickle mair gude,” was the reply.

“You are surprised,” said the daughter to Sophia, “to hear my mother’s good broad Scotch—my bad accent did make you expect French—did it not?”

Sophia, though colouring with a sense of her own ill-breeding in having betrayed by a start, her surprise at the old woman's uncouth phraseology, playfully replied, "Certainly, mother and daughter do not appear to have studied language in the same school."

"Deed, madam, that's just Marget's misfortun, though ye'll may be think I might ha' learnt better wha ha' resided at Orleans ever since the forty-five; but my peur Drumfichen wad na let me sully the purity o' my dialeck aw's 'gen I were ashamed o't. He aye tell't me a right true-born Scot's laird's wife sud pride hersel i' the language o' her country aw's weel's on aw thing else belonging tull't."

"I honour the maxim," said Sophia, "and have, indeed, felt half angry at the pains taken by many Scotch ladies to affect our pronunciation, which can never seem natural, in lieu of their own,

which I have often admired as graceful and pretty."

"Ah madam! I've no mat wi' mony o' yer countrywomen sae rawtional i' their opeenions; deed! it's the rudeness o' laughing at my language that gars me no to be unka wulling to uncloose my lips to strangers—wull ye tak a puckle sneeshing, madam?" opening her snuff box.

Agatha, who had long been on the titter, now burst into a loud laugh, repeating "Puckle sneeshing! Puckle sneeshing! how funny! what does it mean?"

Sophia looked hurt; but the old lady good-humouredly interrupting the reproof she saw rising to her lips, said, "Weel a weel, madam! it's no the like o' this bonnie bairn that 'ell mortify me—its no the laugh o' ignorance I'll shrink frae—its the laugh o' aurogance I canna awa wi."

The word ignorance struck upon Aga-

tha's ear, as implying some sort of reprimand, though she did not altogether understand it, and she looked abashed, which the good old lady perceiving, held out the snuff-box for her to look at, and set her at ease again.

"O how pretty! whose picture is it?" cried Agatha, examining the miniature on the lid.

"Whose sud it be, my dear? but just the prince himsel!"

"O my goodness, aunty, do but look how pretty the prince is!—is he just like that?"

"May be you do not know," said the daughter, "what prince it is my mother does mean?"

"Why the R—t, an't it, aunty?"

"Hout tout!" cried the old lady, and snatching back her box, returned it into her pocket, with an air of displeasure all Agatha's previous rudeness had not provoked.

This made it very clear to the visitors

that their new acquaintance must be a remnant of the true old Jacobite breed ; but how she should chance to be found there, it was not easy to conjecture.

Sophia expressed her surprise at the total absence of Scotch dialect in the daughter, who accounted for it by her having been born and educated in France, where she had married an Irish officer in the French service : his name was Fitzclare, she said ; and she was now a widow as well as her mother.

There was an air of subdued sensibility and meek endurance in Mrs. Fitzclare highly interesting, and when they separated, it was with a mutual desire of farther acquaintance.

Much discussion ensued upon the communications made by the equestrians at their return, and some curiosity was naturally excited.

“ Supposing them lately arrived from France, and on their way to Scotland,

what should have brought them to that place?" Mr. Villars wondered.

"And why so desirous of concealment?" Mrs. Villars added.

"There did not, however, seem to be any particular desire to avoid us," Sophia replied; "for you know, Emily, Mrs. Fitzclare came forward with Agatha, of her own accord, and invited us into the old lady's apartment."

"A mere wish for seclusion may easily be construed into a desire for concealment, by the people of the farm," said Emily: "there is something peculiarly interesting in the daughter."

Katty's mind strongly misgave her that there must be something wrong about them, and she was of the farmer's opinion; for she thought it stood to reason, that when people hide themselves, they have some cause for it; and she offered her services to take the first opportunity of the carriage going that way to sift the farmer and his wife upon the

subject. The idea of Katty's sifting was rather alarming; but as the distance was luckily beyond her walking powers, this remained to be avoided as occasion arose.

The strangers had awakened such a lively interest, that the visit was speedily repeated, and received with evident pleasure. The simplicity and national prejudices of the mother, and the cultivated mind and sweet manners of the daughter, still improved the desire for farther acquaintance; but no elucidation was obtained of what had brought them there.

On Mrs. Fitzclare's leaving the room to procure a cup of whey, she had persuaded Emily to take, Sophia observed to Mrs. Carstairs that her daughter appeared to have delicate health.

"Deed madam! she just destroys herself wi' her care o' me—I canna get her tak air or exerceese, and I fear me I'll just outlive my sole remaining comfort—for

I'm fully stronger nor she I wot—though it 'ell be hard gen siccane misfortune as that dinna gar my auld heart-strings crack!" And tears filled the poor old woman's eyes.

" Might we not succeed in prevailing upon her to take an airing with us, if we were to call in the barouche?" Emily asked.

" Deed my gude young lady, I canna just say ye wad succeed—but the trial o't wad be an unco kindness tull my poor bairn."

In their way home they overtook Katty. " Well! what have you got out of 'em?" she inquired.

" Nothing more."

" No, no; my life on't you get nothing more till it bursts forth with a witness—mercy defend us!"

The proposal of the barouche was approved of by Mrs. Villars; but being aware of Sophia's disposition to enthusi-

astic prepossessions and Emily's confiding temper, she wished to form her own opinion of these mysterious strangers. "Do you think I should distress your new acquaintance by going with you?" she asked.

"Undoubtedly not," replied Sophia; "they seem so gratified by our attentions, that they must be doubly so by yours, my dear mother."

The next day proving favourable, the barouche was ordered; and the kind intentions towards Mrs. Fitzclare perfectly answered. She thankfully accepted of the proposed airing, after having secured the attendance of the farmer's wife upon Mrs. Carstairs during her absence; and Mrs. Villars entirely concurred in the opinion of her daughters respecting the strangers.

These airings were occasionally repeated; still discretion on the one part, and reserve on the other, left curiosity afloat; and poor Katty's regular inquiry

at every return, of "Well! what have you got out of 'em?" only brought fresh disappointment, which she was very sure would be spared if she might be allowed to make one of the party; but some very good reason was always found to avert this, and her patience was nearly exhausted, when the recovery of Mrs. Carstairs from her gouty attack at length gave rise to an invitation for spending a day at the Priory.

Katty now on the tiptoe of expectation, called all her sagacity to her aid, but to little purpose; the mild demeanour of Mrs. Fitzclare, and the incomprehensible dialect of Mrs. Carstairs, equally baffled her penetration, though she clearly perceived they were very deep, and she was sure the old one talked such unintelligible gibberish, for fear of what she might betray if she spoke plain English.

Sophia had latterly been struck with an idea of the eligibility of Mrs. Fitzclare to take charge of the education of Aga-

tha; she seemed the very person to secure her against the impending mischiefs of another visit to Rock Castle. With such a companion she would be safe. Mrs. Fitzclare's partiality for the child, and the fondness with which it was returned, served to foster the plan in her mind; and, it had the approbation of Mrs. Villars, provided the mystery could be satisfactorily cleared up, but this was a delicate investigation to accomplish.

The second visit, however, gave an opening which was turned to account. Mrs. Fitzclare, in expressing her happiness at her mother's recovery, added, "We shall now be able to pursue our way to Scotland, while the weather is yet good."

Mr. Villars expressed his surprise that intending to go from France to Scotland, they should have come into Hampshire.

"It was a very particular reason had taken them to the Isle of Wight," Mrs. Fitzclare answered, but with agitation so

apparent as to check farther inquiry ; and a deep sigh from Mrs. Carstairs, accompanied by a starting tear, proved the reason to be distressing.

Soon after this, Sophia proposed a stroll into the shrubbery to Mrs. Fitzclare ; and when they were out of hearing, " I deeply regret," she said, " that there should be a necessity for your hastening your steps to the north ; it would have been inexpressible pleasure to me that any snug little residence in this neighbourhood could have induced you to protract your stay at least till spring."

" We are not in the situation to consult our own liking quite ; my mother's income does not suit with English living. We must go where cheapness invites : " Mrs. Fitzclare replied.

" I am very unwilling," Sophia returned, " to incur the suspicion of wishing to pry into motives you may have reasons to conceal ; yet I am impelled, by an interest I know not how to resist,

to ask one question—check me, I entreat you, if it be improper—is that your only motive for hastening your departure?”

“It is a very urgent—but not the only one.” After a momentary hesitation, she added, “My poor mother is impatient to seek comfort of her relations; and great comfort, indeed, we do both want!”

“Shall I venture to disclose to you,” resumed Sophia, “a wish I have been cherishing from observing the mutual affection between you and my dear little girl?—it is, that I could devise any mode of obtaining for her a continuation of intercourse every way so beneficial to her.”

A tear of grateful sensibility strayed down the cheek of Mrs. Fitzclare, as she exclaimed, “O! I comprehend!—could any thing in this world compensate for my lost treasure, or give me again a wish to live, it would be such a charge in such a family. But, madam—goodness so un-

merited imposes on me the duty to place confidence unlimited ; if you have now time to give ear, I will relate every sad circumstance."

With all the kind encouragement that could be given, Sophia listened to the disastrous tale ; but it will come more satisfactorily before the reader, when farther acquaintance shall have increased the interest Mrs. Fitzclare is entitled to inspire ; suffice it now to say that Sophia's feelings were wound up to the highest pitch of friendly sympathy for the deprivation her hapless companion mourned ; and her eagerness augmented in proportion, to secure the benefit of her superintendence over Agatha's education. It was therefore settled between them, that she should see her mother safe to Edinburgh, and make over the care of her to those relations, whose attentions would scarcely be inferior to her own ; and then, following up her hitherto fruitless search, whether it proved successful or not, she

would afterwards return to assist Mrs. Delmore in forming the mind and manners of her darling, at a stipend, about which they only differed from Sophia's wish to make it so much higher than Mrs. Fitzclare thought it reasonable to accept.

During their absence, Emily had sought to dispel the gloom that continued to hang upon the old lady's brow, by singing some Scotch ballads, which she did with great pathos, and obtained many tokens of approbation from her auditress, who did not let slip the opportunity of pointing out the pre-eminence of her country music over every other ; and was proceeding to trace the origin of Italian music from it, when a violent scream of Katty's broke into her discourse, followed by the exclamation, " There's a spider as big as a toad crawling upon her handkerchief ! "

Emily went to take it gently off without alarming Mrs. Carstairs, who had not caught the import of Katty's exclamation.

When the old lady perceived Emily's intention, she eagerly cried, "O dinna meddle wi't, my dear!"

"It won't hurt me, ma'am," said Emily, mistaking her meaning.

"Hurt ye?" she repeated with some indignation. "Deed na!—it 'ell no hurt or ane—we ken the Prence owed his life to sic a bonnie beastie awa that—an. It awa soon comit sacrilege awa to or ane be harmed that I can save, but for my part, I 'el prefer a rose to my hand. I—she leaning forward—she took a white cluster mask rose that was growing in a vase, and the spider which was on it, and the spider was on it, and she presented the alternative, and she said, 'but it much satisfac—' and she said, 'I kenmed weel—' and she said, 'a willing so choice you—' and she said, 'we gang see reality—' and she said, '—'

— for the information of any
— that a white rose was for—
— of June, by the loyal

A smile was with difficulty suppressed at this assertion of royal instinct; and Agatha asked how a prince could owe his life to a spider?

Mrs. Carstairs, with great glee, told her the well known story, of a spider's having spun its web over the mouth of the cave, in which the unfortunate *Chevalier* had just taken refuge after the loss of his last battle, and the soldiers who were in quest of him, having agreed to pass on, because they judged from it that nobody could have entered the cave that day; and she concluded her narrative with observing, "And this is the second time Scotland's weal has turned upon a spider; nae true Scot wull harm them, I sall answer."

The anecdote of the Bruce* was then

adherents of the house of Stuart, in honour of the Pretender's birthday.

* Robert Bruce, after being four times defeated, was tempted to relinquish the struggle, and go to the Holy Land; when, upon observing the exertions

also related by the good lady, with much animation ; and pleased with the interest her audience evinced, she went on to say, “ My peur Dumfrichen was ~~see~~ true and leil a Scot he construked a wee bit housie wi his ain bonds awa a refuge for the spiders in winter ; and he aye garred the maid colleck the flees frae the windows, and sweep ’em entull’t for their winter’s proveesion.”

Sophia now returned with her companion ; and Mrs. Fitzclare going up to Mrs. Villars, took both her hands, with strong emotion, saying, “ What a hope of unlooked-for comfort does your angel daughter hold out to me !—oh ! may I be able to justify the confidence she will repose !—she will tell you all particulars.”—

of a spider, continuing to swing itself from beam to beam, after having been six times foiled in the attempt to fix its thread, he became so interested in the event, as to determine that his own fate should rest upon its success. The seventh time the insect accomplished its aim. The Bruce then resolved to persevere, and gained the crown.

Agitation checked her farther utterance ; and Mrs. Villars, guessing in part at what had passed, gave an affectionate reply, which completed the pleasing anticipations of Mrs. Fitzclare.

CHAP. XX.

DURING the remainder of Mrs. Fitzclare's stay at the farm, Agatha was sent to pass some hours of every day with her; Mrs. Fitzclare was fond of natural history, and drew animals and flowers well. Agatha brought some home, and in displaying them to Sophia said, "And here is one so like that Sir Edward used to show me—I can't think of the name."

"When did Sir Edward show you any such thing?"

"In them beautiful books he gave me—O dear!" checking herself, "I forgot—I wasn't to tell.—"

“ Did Sir Edward Arundel forbid you to tell me any thing ?” Sophia asked with some surprise.

“ No—not *he*, aunty.”

“ Who then ?”

“ O but I’m afraid you’ll be angry, if I tell—and that made her bid me not.”

“ Made who ?”

“ Winny.”

“ Well, I shall not be angry at Winny—so tell me what books you mean !”

“ Why then—they were such beautiful books!—Sir Edward gave me at Rock Castle, all full of just such birds and creatures, as dear Fitz paints, and then he used to be so good-natured ; and he used to take me on his knee, and tell ’em me all ! I do love him so ! and he said I must remember their names to tell ’em you, and so I had got a great many by heart—but then Winny forgot to pack ’em up—and when I wanted ’em to show you, she was afraid you would be so angry, and so she said I mustn’t tell—and

I was very sorry, but I didn't like you to be angry at Winny—so I promised her I wouldn't—and you know, aunty, I didn't—only now I had quite forgot with seeing these here so pretty—so pray don't be angry at her!"

Sophia said she would not, but admonished her against entering into such engagements in future, and then—could not but let her thoughts dwell with some complacency on the various little instances so accidentally brought to light of Sir Edward's pleasing attentions to her darling.

The departure of Mrs. Fitzclare and her mother drew forth most affectionate feelings of regret at the Priory from all but Katty, who could not be thankful enough they were gone. Her terrors had fluctuated between the impression taken from the farmer of their being spies, and her own dreadful conjectures respecting witchcraft, founded on Agatha's account of some relics she had seen

of the deposed family; such as, a rag dipped in the blood of the prince, a tooth, &c. She "was not the dupe of such assertions, but saw clearly they were charms;" and her busy fears received 'confirmation strong,' from the horrible report of the blacksmith in the neighbourhood, who "she could assure her brother, had declared to herself that he had been made to burn the hair off a sheep's head and trotters, with red-hot irons, for no purpose that she could think of in the known world, but incantations of witches such as she had read of in a play."

An uncontrollable burst of laughter from Mr. Villars at this interpretation of the "sing'd head," so important to the perfection of Scotch broth, disconcerted his sister to a degree that caused her to break from him with an appearance of wrath not often to be traced in her good-humoured face.

Preparations were speedily after this

set on foot for the removal to Torquay, when a sharp seizure of gout put a stop to the hope of Mr. Villars being of the party ; for the season was fast advancing, and poor Emily's looks in such evident contradiction to her assertions of amendment, showed there was no time to be lost. Mrs. Villars had been somewhat seriously indisposed herself, and change of air was thought requisite for her, as well as for her daughter ; her wish to stay and nurse her husband was therefore overruled, and Sophia proposed her own removal to the Priory with Agatha during their absence, which set all hearts at rest.

Henry Villars had been thrown out of his arrangements with Lord Leonard Ormsby by this unforeseen journey into Devonshire ; he had given him immediate notice of the change ; his Lordship finding, however, that Mrs. Delmere remained, had without delay made an obliging offer to pass his Christmas at

Belmont Park; still without Henry's assistance this would afford but little chance of approaching Mrs. Delnere, and he earnestly conjured him to return for the holidays; to which he agreed, from an eager wish to promote Lord Leonard's interests with his sister, though very doubtful of being able to effect his admittance at the Priory.

Lord and Lady Belmont and Laura had been absent ever since the final separation between Charles and Emily; and as Parliament was to assemble earlier than usual, Lady Belmont and Laura were to stop in town during the short sitting, and the family to return altogether into Hampshire for the Christmas recess.

Charles Belmont's vanity had been as deeply wounded as his passion by Emily's firmness. He had conceived himself entitled to longer and severer struggles; her fever had, indeed, in some degree flattered him that love might still prove

his powerful friend; but her subsequent steady refusal of seeing him (for he had attempted to gain access in more ways than through her mother and sister) highly incensed him; and Laura added fuel to the fire, by her rejoicings in the extraordinary good accounts, she said, she received on all hands, of Emily's recovered health, looks, and spirits.

He could not shake off the mortifying sense of being so easily given up; and he was tempted to try what might be done by awakening her jealousy; or, if he only succeeded in wounding her pride, it would be some consolation—he would not call it revenge, for the pangs she had inflicted on him. Lady Sabina offered the ready means; for Lord Kingsborough had also, contrary to his usual custom at that early time of the year, brought his family to town with him. Charles now, therefore, judged it expedient to give way to his father's frequently repeated exhortations to forego the continental scheme;

thus voluntarily running his neck into the noose prepared for him, till he became entangled beyond the power, and, indeed at length, beyond the wish to extricate himself.

Lady Sabina's indolent disposition acquiesced so amiably in his attentions; Lord Belmont and Laura so artfully followed up the plan of pointing out imperceptible instances of her predilection for him—she was so eminently superior in every external charm and accomplishment to all that surrounded her!—so decidedly the leader of fashion!—All this, together with the persuasion easily enough excited in him, that the Villars family were purposely leaving the Priory to avoid his return into the neighbourhood at Christmas, worked him into a frame of mind quite favourable to the designs that were carrying on.

Lady Sabina had no immediate perception of the drift of his attentions, they were so little beyond what she was ac-

customed to receive ; but when her father acquainted her with the proposed alliance, and the expected aggrandisement of the Belmonts, she soon marked her concurrence, by those public distinguishing signs of preference, which convince the fashionable world that a treaty is on the *tapis*, and warn the crowd to keep aloof. The season of crowds, indeed, was not yet come ; but enough might be done, even at a small party, by the selection of a sofa apart from intruders for carrying on a whispering conversation, to throw the herd of dangles at that respectful distance, which is ever maintained till the re-appearance of a bride again licenses more unequivocal admiration, than very ton-ish men commonly allow themselves to express to single women.

The splendour of this sort of triumph proved irresistible ; to have captivated and engrossed the idol of the day ! to have it rest with his fiat to appropriate

her to himself (as he believed) for ever! so gratified poor Charles's ruling foible—that Emily's image could not long maintain its place—it faded from his mind, and left him, what many a one has been before, the willing victim of pique and vanity.

Laura carried on a most assiduous correspondence with Emily, with a view to the more effectual widening of the breach. She lamented, with endearing sensibility, the increasing attachment of her brother to Lady Sabina; at the same time extolling to the skies the noble part Emily had acted, which alone could have inspired him with the power of so soon and so completely subduing his first love.


Emily's severest sufferings had arisen from the sense of those she feared to have inflicted upon her lover; and however her own singleness of heart blinded her to Laura's subtlety, she could not help being struck with so rapid a transfer

of his affections. This feeling was strengthened in every letter, as she was constantly called upon to rejoice in the increasing effects of her heroic example. The eternal repetition at length succeeded in restoring a tone to her mind, which effectually assisted the healing powers of the mild climate to which she had been removed. Love, esteem, friendship, were terms so nearly connected in her ideas, that the moment which lowered Charles in her opinion, became decisive for the restoration of her tranquillity.

END OF VOL. I.

DOMESTIC SCENES.

VOL. II.



**Printed by Strahan and Spottiswoode,
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DOMESTIC SCENES.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY LADY HUMDRUM,

AUTHOR OF MORE WORKS THAN HEAR HER NAME.

Tedious the tale with lengthen'd lectures fraught :
We're less by precept than example taught. ANONYMOUS.

VOL. II.

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DOMESTIC SCENES.

CHAPTER I.

THE change in the face of affairs in the Belmont family gave so natural a colour to the visit of Lady Sabina's brother at the Park, that Sophia paid little attention to the circumstance, when told of Lord Leonard Ormsby's arrival there. The absence of Mrs. Villars she considered as a decided check to all intercourse; forgetting her father's total disregard of forms of any kind, when not put in mind of them.

The return of Henry was an agreeable surprise, and the reports he had to make of the invalids so very satisfactory, that

the thoughts both of father and daughter were wholly engrossed with the delightful expectation of seeing Mrs. Villars and Emily restored to perfect health in the spring.

When Mr. Villars heard Lord Leonard was again at hand, "Well, Hal!" he cried, "let's have as much of him here as we can. I like that young man: he'll make a figure in the House on the right side of the question. Give him a general invitation to dinner, whenever he can get away from the Belmont's;—I wish to talk over matters with him a little."

Sophia being out of the way when this was said, there was no check to Henry's acting upon it; which he did with due celerity. Lord Leonard of course was not slow in availing himself of so promising an opening. The first day, he could not decently avoid dining with his hosts, but on the following morning he attended the Priory breakfast-table, and, with a look of gratitude to Mr. Villars,

“proposed to himself the pleasure of making one at his hospitable board, at five.” Mr. Villars gave him a hearty shake with the left hand in token of acceptance, the right being disabled by gout; and immediately broached his favourite topic, which led them deep into state affairs.

Sophia was surprised, and a good deal displeased, with this apparent forwardness; and would have decidedly absented herself from the dinner-table, had it not been for the necessity, in her father's present state, of cutting his food for him, which he did not like any one to do but herself. She withdrew from the apartment the moment breakfast ended, and resolved to do the same the instant the dessert should be removed.

An early visit from Laura, however, soon recalled her again to the library. Sophia held her in sovereign contempt for the art and insincerity of her character; was highly indignant at the part she suspected

her to have taken in regard to Charles, and fully aware, moreover, of her designs upon Henry. Not much in the habit of disguising her feelings at any time, she now entered with an awe-inspiring air she well knew how to assume, when either duplicity or profligacy obtruded themselves into her presence.

Laura, already disconcerted at finding Lord Leonard quietly established where she neither wished nor expected it, was now so petrified by the frigid reception she met with, that she could with difficulty rally her wonted smiles. She advanced, however, with a held-out hand, exclaiming, "My dear Mrs. Delmere, I am so overjoyed at the delightful accounts of our beloved Emily's recovered health and spirits, that I could not resist taking the liberty to call and congratulate you upon a more speedy restoration than we could almost have dared to hope for."

"You are very obliging, Madam," not seeming to see the proffered hand, "a

speedy restoration could only be unlooked-for by those who were not acquainted with the firmness and dignity of my sister's mind : I should have conceived you to have placed particular reliance on it." She was unconscious, in saying this, of Lord Leonard's presence : he had been stooping to look for a pamphlet in the lower book-shelves by Mr. Villars's direction, and was eclipsed by the high back of the Merlin chair.

" I assure you," returned Laura, " all possible justice is done in our family to her disinterested magnanimity, and nothing short of her example could have inspired Charles" —

Sophia, having at this moment perceived Lord Leonard, broke into her speech : " We will, if you please, call up a subject of more general interest. Do you know, my Lord, whether my brother was prepared for a ride ? though, if you will have the goodness to touch the bell, we will at any rate send to him, that he

may not lose the honour accident so fortunately offers him of attending Miss Belmont."

This was uttered with a slight stress upon the word accident, that completed the discomfiture of Laura. Nothing could be more just than Sophia's interpretation of the visit; it had Henry solely in view, of whose return she had only heard from Lord Leonard the preceding day. She had been returned herself above a fortnight, without a thought of these friendly congratulations having occurred to her.

"Oh! is Mr. Villars here? I shall be very glad, I'm sure!" she uttered with an air so foolish and so unlike her accustomed self-possession, that Lord Leonard was struck with it, as well as with the extraordinary dryness of Mrs. Delmere's manner, so different from any thing he had yet seen.

"Villars and I had planned a ride,"

he replied, "and I was waiting till he should be equipped."

Before the servant could answer the bell, Henry made his appearance. The sight of him seemed to restore Laura's self-command. "How lucky," she cried, "that my mother insisted on my taking advantage of this first fine day since we have been down; a ride is so wonderfully improved by agreeable company—I depend both on yours and Lord Leonard's attendance, Mr. Villars."

"We had settled to wait upon you for that purpose," he answered: "Sophia, won't you join us?"

"I devote the early morning hours to Agatha," was the reply, "and only take my exercise when she can take it with me."

"Mrs. Delmore is the slave of her duties," said Laura.

"I claim no such merit; I simply follow my inclinations," she returned.

"May I then hope they will soon draw

you out of your retirement to favour us with your company at the Park?" Laura asked.

"Whenever I again venture into the world, I shall consider it as a duty to return the honour of this visit."

Laura, willing to display her amiable forbearance in a strong light to Henry, answered this dry speech with a deprecating look. "I must obtain your forgiveness before we part, Mrs. Delmere," she said, "for what I perceive you consider as an impertinent intrusion on your retirement; but the real fact is, that I took your removal to the Priory for a preliminary step to your return into the society of your friends, if not the world; and I was anxious to put in my claim to be considered in that light by the sister of my dear Emily. I shall, however, refrain from a repetition of my forwardness, till you are inclined to give it encouragement."

"You are very good, Miss Belmont :

be assured I see your motive in its true light, and am proportionably grateful. My leaving my cottage was merely to assist in nursing my father ; and I shall return to my seclusion the moment my mother comes back, with no immediate thoughts of further emerging from it."

Laura was effectually silenced. Casting her eye to the window, " There are the horses," she observed. The gentlemen only waited her commands, they said.

Mr. Villars, looking up from his newspaper, gave her such another nod as he had done at her entrance, adding, " Well, this was a very neighbourly call, Miss Belmont ; and here are females to make you welcome till the return of the absentees, so we shall always be glad to see you ; — and do spare Lord Leonard to us whenever you can, for though I lost no time in sending him a general invitation by Hal, if you spread your attractions, we shall not see half enough of him, and

we will make over Hal to you in his stead."

Laura gave some smiling indistinct answer; and taking her leave, without renewing the offer that had been overlooked at her entrance, she departed with her attendants.

"What a charming young lady she is," cried Katty, who had come in with Henry: "Well, I do hope, from the bottom of my heart, she will make an impression upon my nephew at last. How pretty of her to say what she did about Emily, and your friendship, and that!"

"Yes, she knows how to say pretty things; — but I have been kept a long time from Agatha, so don't let me be called down again this morning, dear aunt."

And Sophia left the room, satisfied with having given a decided repulse to Laura, as well as to find Lord Leonard exculpated, by what her father had said, from the forwardness she had imputed to

him : the general invitation was unlucky, but that she had not foreseen, and could not remedy ; she now, however, deemed it best to give no particular consequence to it, by making any change in her own conduct.

CHAP. II.

"How very cold Mrs. Delmere's manners are!" said Laura.

"I never thought them so before this morning," Lord Leonard replied.

"Possibly they may be different to women from what they are to men," rejoined Laura: "is that the case, Mr. Villars?"

"I am endeavouring to recollect whether this may be the anniversary of any distressing event," said Henry, unconscious of Sophia's suspicions of Laura: "she certainly was particularly grave, but I can assign no cause for it."

"Are her inequalities always assignable to a cause?" Laura asked, with a sarcastic smile.

"Upon my word, I can as little accuse her of caprice as any body I ever knew," returned Henry.

"There is a natural openness and sincerity about her I never saw equalled," said Lord Leonard.

"A slight tincture of dissimulation might at times prove more agreeable though; what a contrast with the dear Emily!" cried Laura.

"Emily is the humble retiring violet," Henry observed, "unobtrusive of its sweets, but well repaying those who seek them."

"Whilst Mrs. Delmere," said Lord Leonard, animatedly, "is the towering spotless lily, offering its pure and lucid hue to the eye of day, the more dazzling the longer it is gazed on."

"How wonderful poetic!" exclaimed Laura: "here's fine turf for a gallop!" and off she set.

She did not give her resentment 'to the winds,' like the 'cares, doubts, and fears' of Whiskerandos; on the contrary, 'she nursed her wrath to keep it warm;' but the winds kindly befriended her by

quickly puffing away all betraying indications from her countenance, which was soon again dressed in smiles to be lavished, ah, how vainly ! on the insensible Henry.

On alighting, she said, in her sweetest manner, " I am not to allow myself to propose your dining with us to-day, I know ; but keep in mind that Mr. Villars admits of Lord Belmont's right to reprisals ; he will assuredly look for them to-morrow, whether Lord Leonard be again seduced from us or no."

How long Henry might have continued secure against all the fascinating lures of which she was so complete a mistress, cannot very positively be asserted ; for, after all, he was not of adamant, and the softening influences of gentle zephyrs and purling streams are far better assistants to the feelings Laura sought to inspire, than balls and concerts in crowded London rooms ; but he gained so powerful a support from the explanation his sister had to give when he enquired into

the motives of her repulsive manner to Laura that morning, as ever after made him shrink from such hateful duplicity.

Mr. Villars, much pleased with his guest at dinner, appeared in better spirits and more free from suffering than he had been at any time since the departure of his wife; Sophia also, relieved from the idea of Lord Leonard's intrusion's having any particular reference to herself, and much pleased with her success in foiling Laura, was uncommonly animated, so that the conversation took a very agreeable turn; in the course of it Lord Leonard, having quoted some little poetical effusion of his elder brother's, Lord Cranmore, added, "He will suit you perfectly, Villars: he's quite as much of a bookworm as yourself: I shall be impatient to make you acquainted: we expect him home shortly."

"Has he been long absent?"

"Better than two years: he went abroad for his health, and soon recovered

it ; but he has since been pursuing literary researches, and *virtù* without end, in the Grecian Isles. I must forewarn you, though, that you may be more than once in company with him before you will be inclined to give him any credit beyond what the Frenchman was so struck with in his English friend, '*un beau talent pour le silence*,' unless his travels may have polished him a little. He was the shyest of the shy, particularly in female company. If I should be allowed the happiness to present him to Mrs. Delmere, I must entreat her not to prejudge him."

"I think," Sophia observed, "the silence of a man who is unwilling to speak is very distinguishable from that of one who has nothing to say."

"There certainly is such a thing as intelligent silence," replied Lord Leonard ; "but it is not your every-day observer that will detect it. I might safely have rested his cause here, however."

On their adjourning to coffee, Mr.

Villars challenged Lord Leonard to a game at chess: he was a most desirable antagonist; for, although fully equal in point of play, he lost many a game by letting his attention be drawn off to the slightest word that fell from Sophia.

On their beginning their game, she had brought out her portfolio to fill in a pencil sketch; and placed herself so as to have the command of the chess-board, by which means she also, unintentionally, got the entire command of Lord Leonard's thoughts, for he could not raise his eyes without their falling upon her.

Aunt Katty was busily employed in finishing some baby-linen for a poor woman in the village; and Henry having strayed to the farther end of the room, was solicited by Agatha to let her see some pretty prints. Having 'the Lady of the Lake' in his hand, he showed her Loch Katt'rine; — a perfect silence prevailed, when all at once the child eagerly exclaimed, "O, dear Henry! do you

know just here," pointing with her finger, "it is so like where I fell into the water at Rock Castle."

"What's that you say, Agatha?" cried Sophia.

"Oh! I didn't know you heard me, aunty.

"How came you never to tell me of your having had a fall into the water?"

"Because Sir Edward said I must not."

"Was Sir Edward with you when it happened?"

"O yes, aunty: t'was he took me out."

"Do come hither, my child, and let me hear how it happened."

"Why, I was riding on pony, and Tom Groom was riding with me; but he didn't much mind because he was getting blackberries, so I went along the narrow path by the side of the water; so pony wanted to drink, and so I was letting him, and Tom called to me not, because he would lie down; but I didn't hear what he said, because he was such a great way

off, all among the bushes on the top of the bank ; so, directly he called, Po lay down in the water, and rolled me off."

Sophia shuddered, and turned pale.

" Your Lordship is either out of practice," Mr. Villars observed somewhat pettishly, " or don't deem me worth setting your strength against; you make no battle at all !"

" I beg your pardon, indeed !" replied Lord Leonard, " I could not help attending to the account of poor Miss Agatha's danger."

" What danger?" enquired Mr. Villars, too much absorbed in the game to have heard one syllable of what had been saying just at his ear.

It was repeated to him.

" But you said Sir Edward Arundel took you out, Agatha?" resumed Sophia: " where was *he* then?"

" Why, he was somewhere higher up, on the bank a-reading ; but he didn't see me, but he heard Tom call, so then he looked, and he saw me kicking

and sprawling in the water; and I could'nt scream, you know, because the water came all into my mouth so; and then he came running and jumping from one place to another, for it was all rocks and stones you know, so that Tom could'nt get down; and then he took me out; and Tom said he wondered he did'nt break his neck, it was such a dangerous place."

Sophia drawing the child nearer, and hugging her to her breast, exclaimed, "O my darling! little did I imagine how near I had been to losing you!"

"Well, it was very pretty of Sir Edward Arundel, I must say," cried Katty; "but I'm afraid you got shockingly wet for all that."

"Yes that I did, but then he carried me in his arms to the house, and had me put to bed, and made it be warmed, and then he was so angry with Winny, but poor Winny couldn't help it tho': she cried very bad indeed when she saw what had happened; for I had run away from her, for Tom to take me on Po without

the leading rein ; and she wouldn't have let me if she had known."

"And then Sir Edward forbade you to let me know it?" said Sophia.

"No, not then, that was one day when I was a-going to have Betsy hold my hand to write to you, and then he said he would hold my hand himself, and that made me love him so, for being so good-natured; and then he said, now we mustn't say any thing about falling into the water, for that would frighten aunt Delmere: she would always be thinking it might happen again."

"How very kind and considerate!" said Sophia; "but he didn't forbid you to tell me when you came home?"

"Yes he did afterwards: when we was on the road he said, 'We won't say one word of the story of the lake to Mrs. Delmere, my little Agg;' so I said, 'why not? it wouldn't frighten her now, you know;' so he said, 'but it would get poor Winny anger, and he had been angry enough at

her himself ;' so I said, you wasn't never angry afterwards ;' so he said, 'but may be you would think you must thank him, and he shouldn't like you to thank him ; wasn't that very odd of him ?'

" He robbed me of a very great pleasure by it," said Sophia, a ray of animation overspreading her fine features.

" Dear me, yes ! and himself too, I think," cried Katty. So thought Lord Leonard, but not exactly in the sense that followed ; " for where's the use of doing a kindness, I should be glad to know," she continued, " if one isn't to be thanked for it ? I've no notion of that."

" A case of this sort might help one to some notion of the use, too !" Henry observed with a smile.

" But Katt's of opinion, you see, that the only reason for saving a child from drowning is the thanks you are to get for it," said Mr. Villars, drolling.

“ No no, not so neither ; but thanks can do no harm that I see for all that.”

Neither Sophia nor Lord Leonard spoke : their minds were full, hers with gratitude and strong approbation of Sir Edward's active kindness, and extreme delicacy ; and his with apprehension of the bias this might give in favour of one who had already occurred to his thoughts as a possible rival.

“ Come !” cried Mr. Villars, “ now let's have another game ; since little Agg is safe and sound here, we can all feel our obligation to Sir Edward without letting him spoil our sport.”

“ O, but I havn't told you the worst of all tho'," resumed Agatha ; “ for, do you know, he made poor Tom be turned away !”

“ That worst a good deal enhances the obligation from your account of Tom, Agatha,” said Sophia, speaking more to her own feelings just then, than to the comprehension of the child,

“ But I was very sorry, indeed ; for Winny wouldn’t never let me go into the stables again, when there was a new groom ; and she said, Sir Edward had forbid her to let me.”

“ Well, do hold your little chatter about it now,” said Mr. Villars : “ Lord Leonard can’t play a stroke for you : there’s check-mate again ! — no glory in beating you to-night !” pushing the chess-board from him.

“ No ! I fear I have tired your patience indeed ; not seeing when my pieces were in *prise* ; I am quite out of practice, and could’nt command my attention.”

“ It’s always the effect of lookers on,” returned Mr. Villars ; “ but I’ll tell you what we’ll do to-morrow ; we’ll have it all to ourselves in my study, and leave them to their prosings.”

Had he happened to raise his eyes in saying this, he might have seen cause to conjecture that an uninterrupted game at chess was not the object nearest to

Lord Leonard's heart ; but they were rivetted on the check-mate he had just given, and he added, "I don't see, indeed, why we might not have our coffee sent to us there."

"I think, my dear Sir, in your present state of health, such very close attention immediately after dinner, would not be adviseable;" was Lord Leonard's observation.

Mr. Villars was something averse to a suggestion, unless, indeed, it originated with himself, and then pretty tenacious of it : he testily answered, "It is said, you know, that a man must be a fool, or his own physician, at forty ; now as I do not subscribe to the first, I beg leave to take my own opinion as to the other."

"I think," said Henry, wishing to draw his friend's attention from this pettishness, as well as to place him in a favourable light to Sophia—"I think it's a pity the test of chess or dice, to which a suitor used to be put in days of yore

as a trial of temper before he could obtain a lady in marriage, should have become obsolete : what an undeniable claim your lordship's would be, who take repeated defeats so philosophically !”

But this was thrown away upon Sophia, whose thoughts had wandered from the chess-board, far as the banks of the lake at Rock Castle could draw them ; and very little satisfaction did Lord Leonard derive during the remainder of the evening from his attempts to engage her in conversation.

A considerable accession of visitors at Belmont Park on the following day caused him to feel himself at liberty to resort again to the Priory ; at least, he might make the enquiry after Mr. Villars's health towards the dinner hour there, and, if not desired to stay, he should still be in time, he thought, for the more fashionable party.

He was instantly laid hold of, however, by Mr. Villars : “ We want you doubly to-day, ’ he said, “ on account of Henry's

having engaged himself to dine with our neighbours, and then we'll have our set-to at chess in comfort."

As coffee-time approached, Lord Leonard was revolving how best to ward off the proposed adjournment to the study, when a sudden increase of pain in the invalid settled the matter at once, and he was obliged to be removed into his own room, lamenting as he went that "he had no chance of a head for chess that evening; if he became easier, he would be wheeled back to the piano-forte, and Sophia should charm away the sense of pain with her voice."

She had not unfrequently done so during her stay with him; and so asked, could not well decline it now, though the presence of a stranger made her feel reluctant. This was an attraction to which her admirer had not yet been exposed; he had uninterruptedly enjoyed the charms of her conversation for the last few hours; and when, in addition to these,

her father came to call for the song, such combined powers of sound and sense wholly subdued him.

Day after day now passed, and still Lord Leonard dined at the Priory, either to supply the place of Henry when he was at the Park, or to enjoy the company of Henry when he was at home; and at the expiration of the fortnight he had not the slightest suspicion of never having devoted a single day, after the first, to his hosts.

It had been cursorily remarked by Lord and Lady Belmont, but lost sight of in the succession and daily variety of their guests. It had been felt by Laura, but having for some time seen little hope of captivating Lord Leonard, she satisfied herself with the prospect of turning her displeasure to better account than by betraying it.

Lord Leonard continued to conduct himself with such delicate regard to propriety as to give no apparent cause for

greater reserve of manners on the part of Sophia, than she would have shown to any other visitor of her father's. Still she could not but be aware, that neither chess nor politics were his object, for whenever he could with any degree of civility do it, he evaded both; neither could the visits be attributed to Henry, for he was as often there without as with him. In consequence of these observations, she drew back from conversation more than she had done, and latterly made Agatha the excuse for absenting herself for a couple of hours in the evening.

Her reserve increased, when she found that upon a sudden call of the Belmonts to town, Lord Leonard was about to prolong his stay by accepting of an invitation from a fox-hunting neighbour of theirs: the change in her behaviour was now so marked as to alarm him.

“ Have I been so unfortunate, as in

any way to have offended you, Mrs. Delmere?" he asked in evident emotion as they chanced to be left for a few minutes alone.

"Not in the least, my lord!"

"There is a change in your manner that cuts me to the soul!"

"I confess it has a motive, though not such as you assign."

"And will you not explain it?"

"I think, my lord, you will not misinterpret my frankness; I will, therefore, honestly tell you, that I shrink from the fear of a misconception being put on the frequency of your visits. I found myself exposed to very malicious observation in this neighbourhood from the unavoidable intercourse I was obliged to hold with Sir Edward Arundel on Agatha's account; and the consequence has been my feeling it necessary to shut my door against him. The absence of my mother and sister might now again expose me to similar animadversions."

“ And do you mean,” he interrupted, “ to exclude man for ever from your society, lest the tongue of malice should accuse you of intending, at some time or other, to restore to the world charms so calculated to adorn it ?”

“ I have done with the world, Lord Leonard; the remainder of my days will be devoted to the remembrance of happiness lost — Oh ! how irreparably lost !”

Seeing her extremely affected as she uttered these words, he judged it was not a moment for any thing but implicit submission to her will : “ Be assured your slightest hint will ever be to me a law,” he said ; “ for worlds would I not occasion you an uneasy thought ! I will accompany the Belmonts to town.”

She attempted to give him a smile of thanks, but it was so fraught with woe, it pained him to the heart, and greatly damped the exultation with which he had heard her say, her door was shut against Sir Edward Arundel.

He set off as he had promised, and Henry forthwith returned to his post at Torquay, till the beginning of term again should recall him to his chambers in the Temple.

CHAP. III.

THE mention of Sir Edward Arundel in the conclusion of the last chapter will, perhaps, excite some curiosity to ascertain the use he may all this while have been making of the liberty he so triumphantly boasted of having recovered.

Ah! reader, you possibly know full well, that 'tis not thus the daring imp, who has so slyly and so successfully circumvented his purposes, will suffer him to shake off his trammels. Whatever exultation he had felt in being "himself again," it was a boast which for the last few years had afforded him but slender comfort, though for the first twenty-four hours, his self-gratulations upon his recent escape continued in full force, and he

dwelt with no slight sensation of pride on his conquest over the weakness that had again gone so near to subdue him.

During the whole of this time, (*i. e.* twenty-four hours,) he had sedulously applied himself to banish Mrs. Delmere from his thoughts, by fixing them, not only on the arts and treachery of Miss Vyner, but on every other instance of female duplicity he had ever heard or read of; but along with the remembrance of Sophia, he had also banished, and perchance somewhat more effectually, the recollection of an auxiliary to heroism, so avowedly potent, as to have been celebrated, both in verse and prose, by abler pens than mine; and this was ** food*;

- * Was ever Tartar fierce and cruel
Upon the strength of water-gruel?
But who shall stand his rage and force,
If first he rides, then eats his horse. PRIOR.

There is also a story upon record (though the author cannot now recollect where); that a physician having asserted the effects of different kinds of food upon animal courage, a caliph appointed the

for he had taken none: and during those hours of the twenty-four which are commonly devoted to another "soother of the troubled breast," he had also most contemptuously bade him defiance, and not even sought his pillow.

The consequences, however, of all this magnanimous inattention to the cravings of nature, were not so satisfactory. A languor and a dereliction of mental discipline stole over his enfeebled frame, and the image of Sophia forthwith resumed its post; and when his thoughts retraced that candid, open countenance, that dignified simplicity of manners, so peculiarly her own, he knew not how to combine them with the most remote idea of art or duplicity. Still, however, the evidence had been so unequivocal; the

experiment to be made on a remarkably fierce Arabian robber, who had been made prisoner, and who, by dint of lowering diet, was reduced to such a state of nervous debility, as at length to tremble at the very opening of a door.

conversation between Miss Belmont and Lady Sabina, which chance had so fortunately brought to his ear, so unintentionally too! (for he had observed Laura check an attempt of Lady Sabina's to continue it,); and after that, the positive assertion of Mrs. Villars in contradiction to it next morning; and Agatha; and the dog; and Mrs. Katharine; all, all concurred in establishing the thing beyond a possibility of doubt. He could not conceive his own weakness in resisting the conviction.

His former nervous sufferings now returned with increased strength, and a restlessness, so insupportable, took possession of him, that he finally determined to force himself into action by volunteering his services to the Peninsula.

Perfectly listless and dilatory in his preparations, and delaying his application from day to day, he chanced one morning to meet Charles Belmont, as, "with solemn step and slow," he was dragging

his weary existence along Grosvenor Square.

Charles, struck with the extraordinary change in his appearance, and still somewhat alive to any thing that brought the Priory to his recollection, stopped Sir Edward; and, after some common-place civilities, they walked on together. As they were about to separate, Charles said, "I wish you would join our dinner party to-day. You want to dissipate a little; nothing is so effectual against low spirits; and it's a set of oddities that are got together for a decision upon this famous wager."

"Famous wager!" Sir Edward repeated, scarce knowing what he said, and little caring.

"Yes; of course you heard of it; between Sir Tristram Traverse and Morgan, you know, about getting introduced to Mrs. Delmere."

Now, indeed, Sir Edward was alive to the subject. He asked an explanation,

which was so fully given, and produced a revolution so overpowering in his feelings, that he was under the necessity of having recourse to the area rails for support.

“ You are ill !” cried Charles ; “ let me step into the Mount coffee-house, and get something to recover you.”

They did so ; and Sir Edward so far recovered his powers of utterance as to decline the proposal for dinner, declare himself subject to these nervous spasms, and thank Belmont for his offered attendance home, which he would not admit of upon any account. Eager to be alone, his full heart ready to burst, he rather ran than walked, till he again reached his own dwelling, and could throw himself upon his sofa, to unravel the confusion of his brain, which was now more bewildered with delight, than it had before been with despondency,

Now, indeed, did the bright image of Sophia again rise before him, in all the

splendour of its pristine dignity, its consistency, its matchless excellence. Adoration was too poor a word to express the reparation due for the degrading misconceptions he had allowed himself to harbour. Her unrivalled merits were the more striking, for the cloud that had veiled them from his sight; all was now clear as day; and the very mode of her extrication from Sir Tristram's last impudent attempt, by throwing herself upon the protection of Lord Leonard Ormsby, was an instance of presence of mind, so much beyond what could have occurred to any other woman, — it was so calculated to make an impression upon Lord Leonard; no wonder it should have acted so powerfully upon his feelings! Well might he be in love! what mortal could behold her and escape it! but far, far be it from him to suspect her of having given encouragement to that love: hard, indeed, would it be to tax her with effects she could not

be seen without producing. No ! so decidedly were her affections buried in the tomb of her husband, that long and assiduous indeed must be the passionate devotion that could ever aspire again to recall them thence.

Having thus ruminated away his misconceptions, as well as his fears of Lord Leonard, nothing now seemed to remain, but to take the wings of the morning and fly to the Priory, to make *amende honorable* at the pure shrine of the goddess of his idolatry.

But Sir Edward's was true love, and *that* is no inspirer of bold proceedings with its object. His mind was no sooner released from the tortures to which it had lately been a prey, than all the train of doubts and fears and diffidence of his own merit, inseparable from the sentiments that filled his heart, again resumed their empire ; together with a very reasonable dread, that any step which might prematurely betray the real state of his feelings

would banish him from Sophia's friendly confidence for ever. He found it so very difficult to frame any plausible excuse for an abrupt return to the Priory, after the unjustifiable manner in which he had left it, that he at length determined upon the self-denying plan, cost him what it might, of adhering to his Christmas engagement at Rock Castle ; and from thence, messages and communications respecting Agatha might give a colour to his subsequent visit, even in the absence of Mrs. Villars, (which absence had also been taken into the consideration of difficulties,) and serve to guard him against Mrs. Delmere's penetration.

To Rock Castle he, therefore, went: it is needless to say, that all thoughts of the Peninsula vanished from his mind.

At his return in January, he was unavoidably detained in London by some law concerns entrusted to him by Mr

Arundel, during which time the Belmont family removed to town.

Now no longer avoiding those circles of fashion so lately his abhorrence, he accepted of an invitation to dinner at a house, where chance placed him next to Laura Belmont at table. It was not till after the servants had left the room, and the conversation had become so general, as to give him the hope of being heard only by the person whom he addressed, that he ventured to begin a distant enquiry, by "hoping that her friend, Miss Villars, had found material benefit from her residence at the sea-side."

"Perfectly recovered," answered Laura: judging, from the tremulous tone of Sir Edward's voice, what would come next, and unwilling to appear in haste with what she meant to communicate, she said no more.

"Mrs. Villars, I also understood to have been unwell."

“ She is wonderfully better too, as her son informed me.”

“ Mr. Henry Villars is then returned to the Priory ?” he said in a tone of satisfaction, feeling that Henry’s presence would be an advantage to his views.

“ Of course,” she replied, carelessly ; “ it could not otherwise have been consistent with Mrs. Delmere’s strict attention to decorum, to have Lord Leonard Ormsby so constantly there.”

“ Lord Leonard Ormsby !” he repeated in a tone of such agitated surprise as he could not immediately command.

“ Yes ; I thought you had known,” she said, “ or I should not have betrayed ; though I fancy it can hardly now be deemed indiscretion to mention, what there seems to be no farther attempt to conceal. It is, however, generally believed in the neighbourhood, that she will be guided by her own professions of consistency, in not giving him her hand.

till the second year of her widowhood is completed."

Laura had again succeeded to her heart's content; Sir Edward Arundel being wholly silenced, and scarce able to command himself, till the ladies leaving the table gave him an opportunity of withdrawing on pretence of business; when he returned once more to his sofa, the veriest wretch, that the most genuine, ardent, and most severely disappointed passion could make him.

It was not simply envy and malice prepense, nor yet the mere spirit of female revenge for disappointed pretensions, but the combination of these various feelings working in a mind unprovided with a single counteracting principle, that prompted Laura to this precious mischief.

In her present elevated views, even the credit of subduing Sir Edward Arundel was no longer of primary importance; and Henry Villars was scarcely worth a

second thought, beyond that of the glory naturally resulting from the number of aspiring candidates, which her new honours and new connections could not fail to produce. For the preparations were now making for the speedy celebration of her brother's wedding with Lady Sabina, and the patent creating her father Earl of Saltland was immediately to follow; in consequence of which, Lady Laura Belmont expected to burst upon the world at the ensuing drawing-room, with an increase of attraction that could leave no room for doubt of her own brilliant establishment in the course of the winter.

The wedding took place at the appointed period; and Lord Cranmore, eldest son of the Marquis of Kingsborough, arrived just in time for its celebration. The earldom was gazetted; and the new Earl and Countess of Saltland, and Lady Laura Belmont, with a suite of at least fifty titled relations, attended the presentation of Lord Belmont and Lady

Sabina upon their marriage. Nothing was wanting that splendour and magnificence could impart to heighten the glories of the day. The drawing-room was crowded to suffocation, — no other topic was discussed in the fashionable circles but the dresses and the beauty of Lady Sabina and Lady Laura, — the newspapers took up “the wondrous tale” next morning, with every appropriate epithet that could adorn and give it currency, not only throughout this kingdom, but to the remotest corners of Europe.

Triumphant beauties! enjoy your hour! short-lived as every triumph where the eye only is concerned! Could these brilliant gratifications reach Charles Belmont’s heart? Alas! it was no longer the heart which Emily’s youthful fancy had decorated with such imaginary perfections. As her image had faded from his thoughts, with it had faded those qualities which the purity and simplicity of her mind had alone impressed upon

his. Ambition, indeed, stepped in, and afforded Lord Belmont a momentary gleam of what he mistook for happiness. Flattery and fashion lent their aid to prolong the illusion ; and, in a very short period, to work an alteration both of manners and feelings, such as will scarcely be credited by those who have not turned an attentive eye to the rapid inroads of example and association upon a vain unsettled mind.

The news of this marriage confirmed the recovery of Emily. The precipitancy of it sunk Belmont to his true level in her esteem. From that moment she never suffered her thoughts to rest upon any recollections of him, but as such obtruded, sedulously sought to counteract them by employments the most likely to engross her attention ; and, by the time of her return to the Priory, she had succeeded so well in her laudable self-control, as to be able to revisit the scenes of their former intimacy, if not wholly

without a pang, at least without any retrospection sufficiently distressing to impede the returning serenity of her mind.

It can scarcely be necessary to dwell on the raptures experienced at the Priory in the re-union of the family, any more than upon the "confusion worse confounded," which joy occasioned in the brain of aunt Katty, though it must be confessed, that the heartfelt satisfaction which glowed on the cheek of Sophia was not wholly unmixed with wonder at her sister's inconceivable triumph over her own feelings, which she was more than half-tempted to doubt having been as strong as they had appeared.

CHAP. IV.

IN the communication Katty had to make of the extraordinary occurrences of the neighbourhood during so many months, she mentioned a pretty little hunting-box, within a couple of miles of the Priory, called Box-Mount, having been lately let, to nobody knew who, which caused abundance of speculation among the neighbours, not without very reasonable fears, that some naughty body might be brought there; for it was a single gentleman on horseback who had been to look at it, and his servant called him my lord, and he had ordered one of the rooms to be fitted up with crib-beds for children, and "as she couldn't hear," she added, "that he was par-

ticularly married, she thought it didn't look so well."

There were so many subjects of interest to discuss after so long an absence, that the circumstance attracted but slight notice.

The uncommon mildness of the weather had contributed to remove all remaining symptoms of gout from Mr. Villars, and restore him to his accustomed enjoyments. The bright warm sun had tempted him to be wheeled out upon the lawn, where the first notes of the thrush exhilarated his spirits, whilst admiring the various specimens of early vegetation as brought to him by one or other of those about him. In the intervals, Sophia and her mother were taking it in turn to read to him. Aunt Katty was busily employed the while in gathering ground-ivy for a sick villager, when all at once she uttered a scream of surprise and pleasure, followed by the exclamation of "Merciful goodness!—niece

Delmere, if here is't Lord Leonard, come back to us!" and then addressing him, who by this time had reached the spot where she was, she added "To be sure, my lord, there could never have been a more agreeable addition than your lordship to our family-party, making it quite complete, as I may say, except for the absence of Henry."

Not a little encouraged by a speech of such happy omen, he made a very kind reply to her salutation, and proceeded to introduce his brother, Lord Cranmore, whose appearance quite answered, Sophia thought, to the impression Lord Leonard had given of him:—a tall, genteel, quiet-looking man, with a very sensible expression of countenance, and a very retired manner; a silent bow followed his introduction to each individual, but he left civil speeches and explanations to his brother.

Lord Leonard said, that "Lord Cranmore's fondness for coursing had induced

him to take a little box in this fine sporting country, which was so near the Priory, that having come down together, he could not resist seizing upon the very first opportunity of introducing him to such interesting neighbours."

"As sure as I'm alive," cried Katty, "its Box-Mount Cottage that your lordship means; and you can't think what a world of conjectures there is in this neighbourhood about it!"

"Then it will be an agreeable exercise of your good-nature, Mrs. Katharine," returned Lord Leonard, "to allay all curiosity by repeating what I have just said; though, for the present, Cranmore has lent the use of it to a friend for the recovery of some sick children."

"Only think how it's all explained now!" exclaimed Katty; "such a parcel of nonsensical stories as have got about!"—

"My good Mrs. Katharine," he interrupted, "I have seen enough of

country villages to know what an inexhaustible fund of gossip a new-comer supplies ; I am, therefore, particularly happy that the information of my brother's taste for coursing, enables you to make it all clear."

"Your lordship may rely upon my making it clear, without loss of time, to every creature I meet with !" said Katty ; and away she scudded.

A tendency to a smile stole over the features of Lord Cranmore, which his politeness instantaneously checked ; neither the inclination nor the suppression escaped the notice of Sophia.

In the course of a pretty long visit, Lord Cranmore had exactly verified his brother's prediction by never opening his lips. On their taking leave, Mr. Villars pressed their staying to dinner, which was declined ; but the invitation accepted of for the next day.

So far all had succeeded to Lord Leonard's wish ; for the reader need scarcely

be told that the taking this hunting-box was a manœuvre of his, though, from his not having been explicit as to the motive, his brother had experienced some surprise to hear of his own predilection for coursing, being a propensity he had not yet detected in himself: however, his quiet observation soon let him into the secret of Lord Leonard's particular admiration of the Hampshire-downs.

The following day passed very agreeably; Sophia not having been allowed to excuse herself, as she wished to have done, from being of the party, as her father was peremptory on the subject.

In the afternoon, Agatha applied to Mrs. Villars for a sight of a drawing of Emily's she had heard mentioned. It represented an interesting occurrence, to which she had been an eye-witness, in Devonshire, and Mrs. Villars related it.

A pleasure-boat was upset in the night of a young woman, who had walked to the beach expecting her lover to land

from it, — her increasing terror as she failed to recognise him in any of the half-drowned passengers who were brought to shore, — her subsequent fainting upon hearing one of the by-standers assert, that if he were among them he must be gone to the bottom, — and her being recovered by the assiduous cares of the very young man she had believed lost, — were all affectingly narrated by Mrs. Villars. Emily had seized the moment of returning life in her drawing, when a sort of doubtful rapture overspread the countenance of the girl on perceiving her lover hanging over her, and given it extraordinary effect.

Lord Cranmore had raised his eyes from the drawing to the artist, at the moment of Mrs. Villars's describing the mute agony of the poor girl before she became insensible, and beheld, in the countenance of Emily '*quel vago impallidir,*' that silent but unequivocal witness of genuine sensibility so happily touched upon by

Petrarch,—so untranslatable into the English language, yet so peculiarly adapted to strike upon an English heart! —and it did strike, in its fullest force, upon that of Lord Cranmore! His remarks upon the composition and execution of the drawing proved him to be a connoisseur. Lord Leonard had, in the course of the afternoon, contrived to draw him out by appeals to his opinion respecting Denon and others, that were scattered about the library table; his observations were all just and agreeably given.

When Mr. Villars challenged his old antagonist to chess, Lord Cranmore, fond of children, began entertaining Agatha with a description of Eastern costumes, &c., and upon her asking him to draw some for her, he surprised them all by the rapidity and masterly style of his sketches: the ice was now broken, and his conversation became highly interesting.

"You are just like dear Sir Edward Arundel!" said Agatha; "he used to do such nice things for me, and tell me all about 'em.—Why don't he come here again, aunty?"

"I hope he will, ere long," returned Sophia; "Henry heard of his being gone to Rock Castle at Christmas, and I expect he will bring us some news from thence, Agatha. You are, I believe, acquainted with him," addressing herself to Lord Leonard; "do you happen to know whether he is in town just now?"

"I—I really—am not sure," hesitated Lord Leonard. "Do let us alone; you are calling off Lord Leonard's attention at a very critical moment!" Mr. Villars exclaimed.

"Is that the man, Leonard, whose strait eye-brow, and finely shaped head, would have equally satisfied Lavater and Gall!" Lord Cranmore asked; "whom I pointed out to you at Lord Egham's dinner?" he added, not receiving a ready answer.

"Yes, yes, the same;" rather pettishly.

"Then I am sorry to inform you, madam, that I heard Lord Belmont say he was confined to the house with a nervous fever."

Sophia expressed her concern in terms of friendly solicitude.

"Check-mate!" exclaimed Mr. Villars triumphantly; "I thought I never could have recovered from that attack!"

"I must make over my revenge to Cranmore," said his antagonist; "you are quite above my hand in the absence of your gout."

"Why, for the matter of that, it was pretty much the same when my brother had the gout!" observed Katty. "You remember, niece Delmere, he wanted the chess-board taken into the study, because Lord Leonard did not mind his play."

Mrs. Villars, not displeased with the remark, but wishing to ward off the embarrassment it might occasion, said,

"Aye, lookers-on always spoil sport, you know."

"Nay, but I must do my niece the justice to say, it was not from her speaking about the game."

This being suffered to drop, she said no more; and Lord Leonard, having resigned his place to his brother, took a seat more to his taste between Sophia and Emily at the work-table, where he exerted his utmost talents for conversation, which were of no mean description: Sophia, indeed, took no great share in it: still he soothed his fears with the advantage he hoped to reap from having so successfully established his brother's neighbourly claims; and the very readiness with which she avowed the interest she felt for Sir Edward Arundel was, he trusted, a sign of there being little to apprehend from it.

Upon taking leave, Lord Leonard observed, that although Cranmore could not immediately take possession of his sport-

ing-box, on account of the sick children, he himself should feel an anxiety about them that might bring him down now and then to enquire after them. This did not fail to produce from the hospitable Mr. Villars, the proposal of making the Priory his boarding house on these occasions.

In consequence of this, Lord Leonard's visits became so frequent, and his attentions so marked, as to be highly distressing to their object. To the cottage, however, he had never gained access; and when she knew of his being in the neighbourhood, she avoided dining at the Priory. Still Agatha was so natural a blind for various little attentions as frequently to foil Sophia's purpose; he never failed to bring with him some appropriate present for the child; books, prints, educating games that required explanation; and none of the family were backward on these occasions, in drawing the recluse from her retreat, except Emily,

who understood her sister's motives, and saved her whenever she could do it without attracting observation.

It had been a favourite maxim with Mrs. Delmere, that it must be a woman's own fault if she continued to be addressed by a man she was determined not to accept ; but in the present instance, she found the contrary ; for all her coldness and reserve was placed to the account of her yet unsubdued grief for the loss of her husband ; she was conscious that in most cases it might fairly be expected that time would at length be triumphant : judging, therefore, and rightly, that Lord Leonard was relying on this powerful auxiliary, she spoke to her mother, intreating her to be explicit with him upon the subject ; but Mrs. Villars asserted, it was vain and inexcusable presumption in a woman to refuse, before she was asked, and declared she would have nothing to do with it. Considering her good sense and discrimination, was she

quite sincere in this plea ? She certainly did not, like "Lady Jane Grenville," wish Sophia to have the credit of a refusal, but she did most earnestly wish, that so unexceptionable a man, as Lord Leonard Ormsby seemed to be, might conquer her daughter's reluctance to listen to him, and she trusted much to the effects of perseverance ; and what mother in the same situation could have helped forming a similar wish ?

When this topic came to be discussed between the sisters, it took a very different turn ; Emily entirely coincided in the opinion of its being false delicacy only that could check the generous wish to shorten painful suspense, and she offered to take upon herself the ungracious task.

" No, Emily, I will not so tax your affection ;" said Sophia, " I never have any difficulty in acting for myself, when convinced I am right. You concur with me in the idea, that his attentions are too

obviously pointed, to be mistaken ; you have observed his manner with other women, and are satisfied he is not that most contemptible of beings, a male coquet ! O how gladly should I revenge the cause of my sex, by letting him pine in uncertainty, if he were — but a man of honour is entitled to candid treatment, and I shall not hesitate !”

The only difficulty was to find a proper opportunity, surrounded as she was, at the Priory. It offered, however, ere long.

Lord Leonard came as usual, with a present for the darling. It was a little conjuring ring, and he happened to overtake her, and her aunt, returning from a walk. ... Sophia bid the child take the ring to Emily, who would help her to discover the puzzle ; and then she instantly began :—

“ I have sent her out of the way with a view to a few minutes conversation,

which I have for some time been anxious to hold with your lordship."

She stopped for a moment to collect her ideas, and he was beginning to avail himself of the opportunity, by uttering some passionate expressions of his devotion.

"I must beg leave to interrupt you," she said, "I am not seeking for compliments; my frankness upon a former occasion, has, I trust, shown you enough of my character to acquit me of vanity, and prepare you for what I am now compelled to say."

Very apprehensive of what she might be leading to, he attempted to break into it by eagerly disclaiming the possibility of his intending mere compliment.

But she again interrupted him; "My lord, I believe you wholly incapable of professing what you do not feel; it is my reliance upon your strict honour, that prompts the unusual step I am taking; your implicit deference to my former fear

of provoking gossiping animadversions has raised you in my esteem, and given me courage to speak upon a point of still greater delicacy."

"Oh! Mrs. Delmere, in pity do not renew or extend prohibitions that exclude me from every chance!"

"I should be guilty of unpardonable duplicity," she broke in, "if I affected blindness to the partiality with which you honour me; and the chance for which you plead, would lead to prolonged disquietude. I think the cold reserve of my behaviour can only have been misunderstood, from its being ascribed to feelings over which time and perseverance may naturally be expected to prevail; it may seem an arrogant boast to hold myself above the common course: still I do not hesitate to say, that I know my own heart, and time can make no change in it. The wish to spare you the continuance of a delusion that might end in

increased pain, urges me to be thus explicit."

Lord Leonard was conscious of the high compliment this generous open proceeding implied, and it heightened his admiration. "Surely," he exclaimed, "you cannot mean to prohibit my visits at the Priory! You will not interdict me your presence whilst the strictest silence confines my feelings to my own breast!"

"One thing more I have to say; be not deluded by a hope of effectual interference from any individual of my family. My principles are fixed and unchangeable. I am honoured by your esteem. I am giving you the most unequivocal proof of mine. This sentiment is decidedly the only one ever to be expected from me. Having spoken so frankly, I must leave it with yourself to judge of the propriety of your continued visits at my father's. I have no right of interdiction there."

They were now so near the drawing-room window as to put a stop to the conversation : but Lord Leonard, wholly disconcerted in this overthrow of all his hopes, declined the wonted hospitality of Mr. Villars, and returned to town unable to form any immediate determination respecting his future proceedings.

CHAP. V.

LORD LEONARD sought Henry Villars, and expatiated at large upon his misery. His friend encouraged him still to hope much from time, but advised him for the present to submit to Sophia's interdiction, and make some excursion that should relieve his spirits. He satisfied him respecting Sir Edward Arundel, by stating the particulars relative to Agatha, with which Lord Leonard was unacquainted; and prevailed upon him to visit an estate in Ireland belonging to the family, whenever the close of the sessions should set him at liberty.

The mention of Sir Edward Arundel, recalled to Henry's mind the injunction in one of his sister's letters to make enquiry after him, which he had neglected to obey. It had been given in consequence of the information imparted by

Lord Cranmore, of his being confined with a nervous fever. Having now walked with Lord Leonard as far as his apartments in Albany, he proceeded to Upper Brook Street, to atone for his remissness, where his name gained him immediate admittance to Sir Edward; but he was shocked to observe the alteration illness had made in his appearance.

A strong family likeness between Henry and Sophia, increased the agitation which the sight of any of their name would naturally have occasioned. Henry, on perceiving it, feared he had been unintentionally let in; and hastened to apologise for his intrusion by saying, "that a letter from Mrs. Delmere, expressing anxiety on the subject of Sir Edward's health, must plead his excuse, if he came unseasonably."

With still increasing emotion, and even a difficulty of articulation, Sir Edward repeated, "Mrs. Delmere!"

"Indeed, I am ashamed to acknow-

ledge my remissness," Henry resumed ; " the enquiry ought to have been much sooner made."

Sir Edward interrupting him with an effort to subdue his feelings, said ; " The being remembered at all, in Mrs. Delmore's present situation, is more than I could have flattered myself with."

" My sister's spirits, I am happy to say," replied Henry, unconscious of his meaning, " are recovering their natural tone as rapidly as could well be expected."

" It would have been a very extraordinary case indeed, if they had not!" said Sir Edward, with a bitter smile.

" Sophia's is a mind of great energy, —not quite to be appreciated by common rules ;" Henry returned, rather hurt with the sarcasm.

" It certainly *did* appear so to me, Mr. Villars, in the short intercourse with Mrs. Delmore to which I have had the honour of being admitted ; but forgive

me if I say, that the present state of things rather deviates into a more ordinary course."

"Do you mean that she was bound to be eternally inconsolable?"

"Eternally is a word of very circumscribed duration in most female vocabularies. I confess Mrs. Delmere impressed me with an idea of her proving an exception to every customary sarcasm upon the sex."

"I am at a loss to understand in what way my sister forfeits this opinion."

"Possibly I may be taking a very undue liberty in glancing at what is not yet meant to be avowed. Have the goodness to excuse me, Mr. Villars, and give me some account of my little friend Agatha."

"Agatha is much grown, much improved, and much out of patience withal, at dear Sir Edward for staying away so long, as she tells me in one of her curious little epistles, which I believe I have in

my pocket," searching for the letter as he spoke; "but do explain to me what you suppose is not meant to be avowed."

"If any particular period is intended to elapse before the marriage is made public, be assured of my not —"

"Marriage!" interrupted Henry, in evident surprise; "Mrs. Delmere's marriage! — is it possible such a report should have been circulated? Poor Sophia! cannot all your reserve and retirement save you from such malicious aspersions? How impossible to escape scandal!"

Henry's astonishment was so real as to call up in Sir Edward far more overpowering sensations. The variety of contending feelings scarcely left him breath to exclaim, — "Can it indeed be possible? Could Lady Laura Belmont be misinformed? — or only premature, perchance!" trembling with irrepressible emotion.

“Premature!” interrupted Henry, “Good Heaven!—that Lord Leonard Ormsby’s visits should have been so interpreted by the neighbourhood, I cannot much wonder; but that Lady Laura, knowing my sister as she does, should for one instant have given credit to it, is, indeed, somewhat surprising!”

Sir Edward was so severely reduced by the fever which had preyed upon his very vitals, that the revulsion from despondency to hope seemed to overwhelm his faculties. He turned deadly pale, and faint. Henry, alarmed at his appearance, was about to ring for assistance; but he motioned not to do so, and pointing to the ether, desired he would give him some drops, and not yet leave him.

When a little recovered, he repeated Laura’s words; and Henry frankly acknowledged Lord Leonard’s admiration of his sister, but asserted it to be wholly discouraged on her part; adding, that he was confident her devotion to the

memory of Delmène was as entire as in the first days of her widowhood.

So alarming a suffocation now took place as to make it expedient to call for assistance; when leaving Sir Edward to the care of his servant, Henry stopped in the parlour till word was brought that he was again relieved. Concluding these faintings to be the result of over-exertion, he regretted having been let in; and, determining his next enquiry should only be at the door, he proceeded straight home to write Sophia a very melancholy account of Sir Edward's condition.

The Easter recess carried a large party to Belmont Park. The two fashionable sisters drew a considerable train after them.

Sophia felt deep solicitude for Emily's first meeting with Lord Belmont, and anxious to afford her the support of her presence, she had taken the earliest opportunity of paying her compliments to

the new Earl and Countess, and Lady Laura; who, being themselves now released from all fears respecting Emily, were courteous and affable beyond their wonted graciousness, and protested they should reckon every party incomplete, in which the family at the Priory was not included. No excuse was admitted of for their joining the gay set that very evening.

They delayed their tea visit till the usual supper hour at the Priory, hoping by that time to find the whole party assembled in the drawing-room at Belmont Park; but the ladies only were yet risen from table. Laura's very warm reception of Emily, had, however, before the gentlemen came in, a little tranquillised the heart-beatings that she could not quite divest herself of, in the anticipation of this trying meeting.

Sophia's eye was steadily fixed upon Lord Belmont when he entered. She perceived his to fall immediately upon

her sister, and a slight emotion betrayed itself in his countenance, but was as quickly subdued ; and he advanced with all the polite ease of a perfectly well-bred man ; enquired after Mr. Villars, and his friend Henry ; and then quietly turning to the coffee that was offered to him, entered into conversation with the person nearest him.

The cool unfeelingness of this behaviour was such a support to Emily's firmness as entirely relieved her from all further trepidation.

Lord Cranmore, whose cottage was now free from the little invalids that had occupied it, had very readily agreed to the proposal made by his sister (at the suggestion of Laura), that he should take possession of it on this occasion. He did not long delay availing himself of his introduction at the Priory ; and Mr. Villars, as usual, gave him an immediate invitation to dinner, which was very readily accepted.

Coffee was just over, and Katty had

coaxed Emily to the piano-forté for one of those Irish melodies her sweet-toned voice carried so irresistibly to the heart. Lord Cranmore in rapturous attention was leaning on the end of the instrument with his eyes rivetted to her face, when the door opened, and Lady Laura and Lord Belmont appeared.

Emily was so placed at the instrument that she could not see them; and her auditor so entranced, that he neither heard nor saw any thing, till a sudden exclamation from Katty recalled his senses. "Well! for my part! of all the birds in the air! who could have thought of seeing Your Ladyship at this time o'day!"

It had lately been Laura's fate to meet with something to disconcert her on visiting the Priory. Lord Cranmore was naturally an object of greater interest to her than his younger brother. She had in vain exerted her best powers to draw him into conversation; his taci-

turnity had proved unconquerable ; she had in vain displayed her musical ability ; he simply pleaded a want of ear ; she had, notwithstanding, seen him conversing the preceding evening with playful ease with Sophia and Emily ; and now she had found him evincing the strongest sensibility to tones to which he had professed himself impenetrable ! It was with difficulty she could command herself so as to deliver her mother's invitation for the evening with any degree of civility.

A civil excuse was offered in return.

" And how long may I ask," cried Laura, addressing herself to Lord Cranmore with a sarcastic smile, " How long has Your Lordship been gifted with this new perception of the powers of music ?"

" A renewal of the wonders of old !" was the quiet reply : — " Balaam's ass never spoke, you know, till he beheld an angel !"

This answer was not calculated to re-

store placidity to her ruffled brow. She said no more.

Lord Belmont had made up to Emily with increased ease of manner, and even requested to hear a song that had formerly been a favourite with him ; but she coolly rose from her seat, saying, after so long a separation from Lady Laura, she had much to hear from her ; and was moving towards her, when Her Ladyship abruptly declared they should hardly have time to dress before dinner ; and departed with very little ceremony, followed of course by her brother, though with a look that betrayed both reluctance and disappointment.

CHAP. VI.

It was a morning or two after this that Sophia dropped in at breakfast time, at the Priory, to settle the plans for the day with her mother and sister; and she was just taking Agatha by the hand to return to the ~~liver~~ ^{liver} when the child gave a sudden spring from her, with a scream of delight, "O dear, dear Sir Edward! there he is, come at last! — and Uncle Henry!" and she darted across the lawn to meet them.

Sophia followed, — a glow of pleasure overspreading her countenance; and she warmly expressed her satisfaction at the restoration of health his looks bespoke. Those looks did, indeed, brighten at such a reception, and it required all his prede-

terminated caution to repress the emotion that would have betrayed him. She reproached Henry with negligence, for not having more minutely answered her enquiries after Sir Edward's health, when he had created so serious an alarm by his representation of it. Much struck with her manner, which evinced an interest beyond what he had supposed, her brother now reproached himself with some neglect, though it was in a great measure accounted for, by the repeated delays that had occurred in this proposed visit to the Priory.

The fact was this : when Henry, after the very alarming state in which he conceived he had left Sir Edward, returned to make his enquires, he found that orders had been given for his admission ; and to his utter astonishment, the traces of disease had disappeared so entirely, that he experienced but slight additional surprise, when Sir Edward made the proposal to him of this visit, having, as he said,

communications to make to Mrs. Delmere from Mr. Arundel respecting his granddaughter. Henry happened to be just then engaged in some business that did not admit of being broken into, and a more distant day was fixed than at all suited the lover's altered feelings ; but he was so perfectly aware of the necessity of guarding against a premature discovery of his passion, that he bridled his impatience, deeming the offer of a place in his chaise to the brother as a sort of friendly covering to his own views. The day had been several times unavoidably put off; and in the constant expectation of its taking place, Henry had been careless of writing as explicitly as Sophia wished.

The thousand little kindnesses shown to Agatha, had placed Sir Edward in a light so different from that in which he had been first viewed — his forbearing and delicate consideration in withholding the knowledge of the child's accident —

and his very serious subsequent indisposition, had altogether awakened an interest for him, of which Sophia as yet felt no distrust, but which excited the most agreeable hopes in those by whom she was surrounded.

Sir Edward raised to a pitch of rapture by her evident pleasure at the sight of him, felt equal to any gaiety that might be proposed, not even shrinking from the prospect of waltzes and reels, which were talked of for the evening at Belmont Park.

Lord Cranmore's morning call at the Priory had naturally led to his being asked to meet Sir Edward Arundel at dinner; and, notwithstanding his natural shyness, very rapid advances were made in the course of it to more intimate acquaintance. If he had been struck with Sir Edward's turn of countenance, and shape of head, at Lord Egham's, when he was out of reach of hearing his conversation, how much more so now by the sense and

~~feeling~~ of all he said, the unaffected
~~language~~ in which his sentiments were
~~expressed~~, and the elegant ease of his
~~style~~ department. Sir Edward, on his
~~part~~ was not less pleased with the intel-
~~ligent~~ expression, and mild unobtrusive
~~spirit~~ of observation, that sat on the brow
 of Lord Camrose, whose naturally se-
 rious cast of countenance acquired an
 inimitable charm when an occasional
 smile illumined it; and he gave way the
 more readily to the favourable impression
 he was receiving, from the very unequi-
 vocal symptoms His Lordship betrayed of
 exclusive devotion to Emily. Henry,
 desirous of promoting the acquaintance
 between two such superior men, enli-
 vened the discussions that arose by his
 quiet playfulness, and the original per-
 ceptions of his own well-stored mind;
 added to this the enthusiastic glow of
 Mrs. Delmire's turn of thought; the
 gentle and judicious discriminations of
 Emily; the sterling sense of Mrs. Vil-

lars; and the energetic clear headedness of her husband, all contributed to give an interest to the subjects treated of, so much above the common run of table-talk, as could not fail of improving the good-will of the company towards each other.

In the evening, Sophia and Emily, attended by Lord Cranmore, Sir Edward, and Henry, adjourned to the Park. Among the arrivals there, was the Duke of Ulswater, an object of no small importance to Laura, being young, rich, and single; but young as he was, he proved above Her Ladyship's hand. His father had been a Chesterfieldian of the first lustre, and had too carefully trained his son to leave him an easy prey to a matrimonial bait. His wary grace had judiciously divided his adorations between the two rival belles, till he should be able to form some decided opinion respecting Belmont's susceptibility, with regard to his wife. He was not long in discovering,

by tokens almost imperceptible to eyes less experienced, that he might safely devote himself more exclusively to Lady Sabina. Laura, quickly aware of the turn his attentions were taking, sought to awaken his jealousy, by a marked preference to Henry Villars, but in vain did she spread her toils; neither was the Duke jealous nor Henry caught.

In the course of the evening the piano-forté had been resorted to: Lord Belmont immediately pleaded his fondness for music, as an excuse for withdrawing from the Faro-table, and earnestly solicited Emily for some of those ballads he had been used to dwell upon with rapture. This she coolly declined; but could not so easily ward off the joining Laura in the duets she proposed. — As they finished the first, Laura exclaimed,

‘There is in souls a sympathy with sounds!’ with a look of such meaning to her brother, as caught the observation of Emily; and she instantly res

the brunt of any accusation of caprice she might incur, by the refusal to utter another note.

Emily's eyes were now as much opened to Laura's proceedings as Sophia could wish, and she was highly displeased, moreover, with Lord Belmont's manner. The sisters agreed, therefore, to decline all farther invitations from the Park, while the present party remained there.

Of course, Lord Cranmore and Sir Edward became seceders likewise; and the mutual liking between them soon grew to such a degree of intimacy, that when Sir Edward spoke of returning to London with Henry, according to agreement, Lord Cranmore pressed his acceptance of Lord Leonard's apartment at Boxmount Cottage, with a friendly earnestness that was not to be resisted. And Henry, well pleased with the observations he had lately made respecting Sophia, was very ready to oblige him by deferring his departure.

Lord Belmont had taken much pains to regain a footing of intimacy at the Priory, but Emily, equally offended at his apparent neglect of his newly married wife, and the levity of his manner to herself, had constantly left the room the moment he entered it ; and he had finally gone away from Belmont Park, stung to the quick by this behaviour ; mortified, also, in the extreme, by the comparison which constantly forced itself upon his notice, between his former love and the insipid Sabina, his passion now resumed a power that determined him to leave no means untried of recovering an interest with Emily ; never stopping to ask himself to what it was to lead.

A pressing invitation was shortly after this received, from Mr. and Mrs. Valacort for Emily to accompany her brother on his return to town. Very reluctant, indeed, to leave the opening charms of her flower-garden, she would fain have declined the proposal, but Sophia so eagerly seconded

the wish of Mrs. Villars, for her acceptance, that having no very valid reason to urge against it, she found herself obliged to comply.

Sir Edward Arundel had never before happened to be in the country, in so delightfully forward a spring, he said. He found his health so much improved by it, and his taste for rural scenes so greatly increased, that he could have wished to persuade Lord Cranmore to stay and enjoy its beauties a little longer ; but Lord Cranmore, on the contrary, having heard a very early day fixed for the departure of Emily, was seized with the sudden recollection of some business of moment he had left unfinished in town, and which could not admit of longer delay. Though he insisted with friendly urgency upon Sir Edward keeping possession of the hunting-box as much longer as he should incline to stay, this might have proved a betraying circumstance, and was, therefore, prudently declined.

Mrs. Villars not having been in London since Mr. Villars had relinquished his seat in Parliament, little suspected the whirl of dissipation into which she was driving poor Emily. Mr. Valacort had not been long married at that time ; and the impression her short acquaintance with her sister-in-law had made upon her mind, was that of an elegant, well-bred, pleasing woman, affectionate and obliging, and taking a kind interest in all her husband's connections.

And all this she was ; but the world had drawn her into its dangerous vortex. No sooner had the claims of Mr. and Mrs. Valacort to notice transpired ; his large fortune ; handsome house ; splendid establishment ; excellent cook ; choice wines ; than the most flattering *provenances* every where assailed her, and proved irresistible : her elegant taste, moreover, gave a peculiar charm to all her *to-do's* ; her parties ; her balls ; her *petit soupers* ; her breakfasts, were in the

highest request, and nothing went forward of any kind to which they were not invited. Mr. Valacort, extremely fond of his wife, and never so happy as when he saw her so, good naturedly gave way to a style of life not as entirely suited to his own inclinations as to hers. He was fond of Henry Villars, and would gladly have had more of his company, but the entire dissimilarity in their modes of life, hours, and society, combined, with his nephew's naturally retired manners, to keep them much asunder.

Henry had indeed apprised his mother and sisters of Mrs. Valacort's increased habits of dissipation; but still as he had always been told by the very few stylish men with whom he happened to be acquainted, that she was not at all ranked with the most flighty tonish dashers, he did not state her way of life in a light sufficiently strong to deter Emily from encountering it.

CHAP. VII.

EMILY and Henry Villars arrived in Stanhope-street towards seven in the evening, and were very affectionately received. "So lucky!" said Mrs. Valacort, "that my wish to be in time at the new opera made me order dinner early to-day; for I suppose you are both famished after your journey: it will be served presently."

Emily was rather surprised to hear it called an *early* dinner, though from the hours at Belmont Park she knew there *were* later; and she wondered what the opera-hour might be, for which Mrs. Valacort was preparing, observing her to be still in her morning pelisse and bonnet.

“ You have timed your arrival every way so fortunately !” continued her aunt ; “ for there is to be a drawing-room on Thursday, at which I shall present you : they occur so rarely now, that it is a great hardship upon the young people who are to be brought out.”

Its being deemed a hardship, was something of a surprise again ; having always heard Laura talk of the necessity of attending the drawing-room as ‘ a sad bore,’ and not aware that it was an indispensable prelude to a young lady’s *entrée* into the fashionable world ; however, as she found it was considered fortunate, she was willing to think it so.

When they were rising from table, Mrs. Valacort said, “ You are probably too much fagged with your journey to care for the opera to-night, otherwise you need not mind dress as you may keep back in the box.”

“ My dear aunt, I am in no such haste for dissipation ; but do not let me inter-

fare with your engagement. I shall look forward to the opera as the greatest treat London has in store for me, if you are kind enough to take me when you happen to go again."

Mrs. Valacort, smiling at the word 'happen,' replied, "You happen to be in luck there, too! for my colleague is detained in the country, so you shall have her ticket twice a-week during your stay."

"But, indeed, I am not so unreasonably fond of amusement, as to expect to go into public twice a-week!" cried Emily, "I earnestly hope, my dear madam, you will not let your goodness to me draw you into any thing more than is quite agreeable to yourself."

"Twice a week!" repeated Mrs. Valacort laughing: "you may think yourself well off when you are not twice *a night* in public during your stay with me."

"Poor rustic!" said Henry, smiling at the air of alarm that took possession of Emily's features, "how must your con-

ceptions expand before they reach the exigencies of the hour in a London life!"

"Don't look so scared, my dear!" resumed Mrs. Valacort: "I shan't suffer you to be diverted out of your senses; but you can't imagine what a world of business regularity will carry one through: however, I feel very much inclined to indulge a fit of idleness to-night and give up the opera: a domestic evening at home with you both will be quite a treat, and afford leisure for talking over the dear Villars's, whom I feel really shocked to have been such a stranger to of late."

"Stranger, indeed!" returned Emily: "not even one of the flying twenty-four hour visits, since poor Sophia's return, nor for some years before! and scarcely a letter in six months!"

"Why, as to letters, Emily, when you see what a London life is, you will cease to wonder; and with regard to visits, we lie north and south, you know.

Lionel will vouch for me, I have always been planning a visit to the Priory, on leaving town; but it has so happened, either that a party has engaged to go down with us, or to follow us so quickly, that we have been obliged to hasten to the Abbey, to receive them. You have no notion, Emily, how the duties of society lead one off from what one would best like to do."

Emily thought the term duty rather misapplied, but supposed she should learn to understand the fashionable acceptance of words by degrees, and remained silent.

"I think I shall only just look in at the last ballet myself," said Mr. Valacort, "as you say, Caroline, a domestic evening will really be a treat, and to us have all the charm of novelty."

"By the way," said Mrs. Valacort, as they were going up to the drawing-room, "I must send immediately to the dress-maker, about your court-dress!"

and she rang the bell, to give her orders for Madame Clinquant, whilst Emily's eyes wandered in admiration of the taste and elegance with which the apartment was fitted up, and rested with delight on the book-cases and *chiffonieres* so well filled.

"I see treasures here, that may furnish many a domestic evening's enjoyment, if I may be so indulged during my stay," cried Emily, as she eagerly ran over the titles of the books.

"Domestic evenings are not exactly what people usually resort to London in quest of," was the answer: "we shall endeavour to substitute something a little gayer, to the humdrum pastimes of the country."

"The mornings are delightfully long, if you don't dine till eight!" Emily returned: "that will allow some hours comfortable reading; and I am never tired of reading aloud, if you like being read to."

"Lord help you! my dear! the morn-

ing is scarcely long enough for all the necessary avocations that must be attended to; — no, no, you'll soon see how all that is."

"And are all these well-filled shelves only for show, then?" Emily enquired.

"For comfort, child! nothing makes a room look so comfortable as books; it does away all appearance of form; but if you are so desperately bent upon reading, you are welcome to take a volume of any thing you like into your own room, in case you should sometimes be ready a few minutes before my breakfast hour. On one condition, though, that you don't talk of books in company, unless it be the last novel, or a new poem of Lord B——'s: I should hate to have you set down as a blue stocking!"

"Is that the inevitable result of a liking for books?" Emily asked with a smile, "and is the term very opprobrious?"

"They are a mighty affected quizzical set in general: we who reckon ourselves

the ton, hold them in perfect contempt: there are great houses, however, where they are *accueillis*; if you have a curiosity to see the nature of them for once, I can take you to Lady ——'s, who makes a great fuss with them; and I have free access to her *parties choisies* at all times."

"Indeed, I should like it exceedingly," Emily replied; "for I had no conception that literature made a separation in society:—but you can't mean that fine people hold it a disgrace to read?"

"O dear no! in the country every body reads; and there, where topics of conversation are scarce, there is not the same objection to talking of it:—but you will soon see how it is here!" Mrs. Valacort repeated.

Emily was, indeed, concerned to see how it was with her aunt. The gentleman now came up.

"Apropos of affectation!" resumed Mrs. Valacort: "I hope Mrs. Delmere

don't mean to persist much longer in her's, for it is really quite vexatious to observe the sneer and sarcasm with which her 'unexampled grief' is alluded to."

"Can you, who know Sophia, deem it affectation, dear aunt?" Emily asked, much hurt,

"It is probably not affectation in her," said Mr. Valacort: "she was always an enthusiast?"

"And very romantic to boot," rejoined his lady; "but, she should consider, the world does not understand and will not allow for these peculiarities."

"But Sophia means to have no farther concern with the world!" said Emily.

"Pho! nonsense!" cried Mr. Valacort.

"Where it is necessary to veil *cultivation of mind* to ward off the charge of *affectation*," said Henry, "we may deem it fortunate if *deep feeling* escape the imputation of downright *folly*."

"Lord bless me!—not at all!" said Mrs. Valacort; "on the contrary, feeling is quite the foible of the day; one hears of nothing but sensibility, only it isn't expected to last for ever."

"No; to do it justice," returned Henry, "permanency is not indeed its prevailing characteristic."

"It would, however, be kind to Sophia," Mr. Valacort resumed, "to endeavour to draw her out of her eccentricities."

Emily answered, for it being very much the wish of all the family to restore her to her friends and to society. The conversation then turned upon interesting family topics, till interrupted by the arrival of that high priestess of taste,—Madame Clinquant.

This weighty concern having been duly attended to, tea was called for; and at half past ten Mr. Valacort's carriage was announced. Turning to Henry, he said, "It may take you home after set-

ting me down, and by the time it returns the ballet will be nearly over ; and then I'll just look in at Lady Eastcourt's to see whether I can get a director's ticket for Emily for the Ancients to-morrow, as you suggested, Caroline."

" And, if you should fail, I may probably get a royal one at the Duchess of Derwent's supper," was the answer : " so if you will call for me in your way from Lady Eastcourt's, I shall be ready.— Bid Chalmers light the candles in my dressing-room, Bonaire, I shall be with her presently."

This winding-up of a *domestic evening* was quite as great a surprise to Emily as any novelty that had arisen in the course of it.

" I shall not be long dressing," said Mrs. Valacort ; " you may amuse yourself the while with writing your name on my visiting-tickets. — I should not set you so tiresome a job ; but that I happen to have just turned away my porter, and

am not yet suited ; and Bonaire makes such a shocking hand of it," tossing her several parcels of visiting-tickets as she spoke.

" I shall not need to go very deep into this provision for the month allotted to my visit !" said Emily.

" Lord, love you my dear ! they'll not go half through my visiting-list : don't you know that after your presentation my men must go all over the town with these, to secure your being invited every where with me."

" And must I go every where ?—to people I have never seen ?

" To be sure you must."

" But how is it possible to keep up such an extensive acquaintance ?—here are some hundred tickets !"

" You'll see !—you'll see !" repeated Mrs. Valacort, as she went away laughing, much amused with Emily's simplicity, and delighted with her beauty.

“ My aunt or the world must be altered since my mother has held intercourse with either !” thought Emily, “ or she could not have been so bent upon my making this excursion ; for surely this must be the very extreme of fashionable dissipation ! — what a melancholy reflection !”

And the sadness of it pursued Emily some time after laying her head upon her pillow, till fatigue and exhaustion at length produced their natural effect, and locked up that and every other care in happy oblivion.

CHAP. VIII.

TWELVE o'clock was the breakfast hour ; before which, Mrs. Valacort had surmised the possibility of her niece's having occasionally a few minutes to spare upon a book ; whilst Emily, in the habit of rising nearly with the lark, felt great satisfaction on hearing an hour named which would, in fact, secure her a little day of her own before that of her aunt began : this was the only agreeable novelty she had yet met with in Stanhope Street.

On the following morning, she had written a long letter to the Priory, after having devoted her first hours, as she was ever wont, to a study which she deemed her best security against deviations from those strict 'rules of right to which she

strongly felt the importance of adhering. —I would not startle my tonish readers by naming the volume; but should it, perchance, be guessed, let it also be remembered that, educated wholly in the country, she was devoid of that noble confidence in unassisted reason, which the more highly accomplished town belles find all-sufficient to preserve them from error. Prone to distrust herself, she was fain to seek for daily support where her unworldly mother had early taught her to look for it. Nay, indeed, truth compels the avowal that, not content with this, she sought for farther assistance from one of her selections out of her aunt's choice collection, a volume of Sermons! Will the name of Allison on its title-page obtain her immunity?—if not, she must abide the censure, for so it really was. Along with it, however, she had also chosen 'The Lord of the Isles,' 'Don Roderick,' 'Lara,' all new to her; and she was deeply immersed in poetic dis-

tress; when, punctually at twelve, she was summoned to the breakfast-table.

"You need not wait for a summons, Emily," said Mrs. Valacort, "you may depend upon finding me here at the striking of the clock; punctuality and regularity are the two great hinges upon which all my avocations turn; and by means of which I get through more than half the world beside."

Emily, much pleased to hear her boast of two such valuable qualities, cherished a hope they would not be wholly bestowed upon trifles.

"Your brother, Henry, is a mighty good sort of young man; and, I dare say, very sensible and very learned, and all that sort of thing; but, as I tell Lionel, he sadly wants polish! no air of fashion about him at all!—Why did not Villars send him abroad during the year of peace?" said Mrs. Valacort, carelessly sipping her tea as she spoke.

Emily was equally surprised and mor-

tified at the kind of contemptuous 'good sort of young man,' applied as designating Henry, whom, with the tenderest sisterly partiality, she was accustomed to consider as one of the first of human beings; for "who could ever think of his manners that knew his mind and his talents?" was the prevailing observation at the Priory. But checking her feeling for the moment, however, she only answered, "My father proposed a tour on the Continent to him, at the time you mention, but he did not seem inclined."

"You have hurt Emily without intending it, Caroline," said Mr. Valacort, kindly: "I see, by her tell-tale countenance, she does not like to hear him called 'a good sort of young man:' its what all females object to; but, unless we can get him a little amongst us, and rub him up to show something more of what is really in him, he'll get no better epithet in the fine world, I can tell you though, my dear!"

“ It is not any epithet the fine world, to whom he cannot be known, might bestow upon him that would at all hurt me,” replied Emily ; “ but the opinion of a relation cannot be indifferent ; and I imagined my aunt too well acquainted with his claims, both of head and heart, to have spoken of him slightly as of a common character ! ”

“ Why, to tell you the truth, Emily, it is not easy to get over a deficiency of manners in the world : but I really didn’t mean to hurt you, for we love Henry enough to be anxious for his appearing to the best advantage : he will be Lionel’s heir, you know, as we have no children, and so we want him to make a splendid alliance.”

“ I have tried every mode of coaxing him to us,” resumed Mr. Valacort, “ but he affects to keep such out-of-the-way hours, and pleads study, and *that*, you know, is a great joke, with the immense

property which must one day centre in him."

"I believe," Emily gravely answered, "my brother does not conceive it to be disgraceful to a man of fortune to study!"

"His being so unlike other young men inclines one to fear he may have formed some low attachment!"

"Good Heaven! my uncle!" interrupted Emily; "of all the unmerited suspicions that could attach to Henry—"

"Well, well," interrupted Mrs. Valacort, "don't take the suggestion so very deeply to heart!—he would have plenty of high precedent to plead if it were so; but, I protest, he gave such earnest of improvement yesterday, in the arch playfulness of some of his observations, that I think the very having Emily with us will draw him out; and I have half-a-dozen young women of fashion in my eye, not one of whom would say him

may, if we could but get him to make up to them."

Different as Emily's matrimonial wishes for her brother were from those of her uncle and aunt, the really well-meant solicitude they expressed softened the pain their low estimation of his merits had given her. Adverting, however, to Mr. Valacort's ill-grounded suspicion, she said, "So far from the slightest disposition in my brother to any thing derogatory of his place in society, I should —if I were to select a single expression as characteristic of his mind and thoughts —I should say it was 'elegance.' —I am not speaking of his exterior," she added, observing the smile rising to Mrs. Valacort's lip; "though I must confess that, according to my confined ideas, even *that* appears far preferable to some of the very fashionable guests I have seen at Belmont Park."

"O! his person is undeniably good: I have no quarrel with that!" rejoined

her aunt; "and I'll do you the justice to allow you *ought* to be a judge of elegance, for, in truth, it's no compliment to say it is personified in you!"

Emily, wholly unused to the newly-imported foreign custom of expressing admiration of looks and dress to the face of the person, blushed up to her eyes at this speech. Mrs. Valacort went on:—

"Lionel and I must accustom you to hear these kind of truths, my dear, that you may not be in danger of betraying your rustic education by that sad trick of blushing, to which I perceive you are so prone;—but, apropos, of Belmont Park; pray how does that young *ménage* go on?"

"I believe pretty much as fashionable *ménages* do go on!" she answered, with some embarrassment, but trying to smile.

"Because we heard of something rather more rapid than usual: the Duke of Ulswater is said to be very assiduous, and these are early days for that!"

“Is there any specific time,” said Emily, playfully, wishing to ward off any allusion to Lord Belmont, “at which a fashionable wife may allow of particular attentions from a gay young man?”

If there be,” said Mr. Valacort, looking affectionately at his wife, “Caroline has not yet found it out.” And, in truth, they were a most attached couple, notwithstanding the hold fashion had taken upon their general opinions and manners.

“It is not so much the Duke’s attentions, as the early falling off of Lord Belmont that causes surprise,” Mrs. Valacort resumed: “they say he actually already neglects her, though so desperately in love when they married.”

A most opportune note was just then delivered, which prevented the observation that might have been made on the fluctuations of countenance this speech had occasioned. Mr. Valacort’s eye was also luckily fixed upon his newspaper.

“ Now mind, Caroline,” he said, when he had done, “ I charge you not to be sparing in setting off this pretty person to the best advantage, of which, however, it may be fairly said, ‘ when unadorned to be adorned the most,’ but that would not do in the royal presence. — Heaven defend us ! what another blush was there, Emily ! but *I* don’t quarrel with it ; modesty and simplicity will stand their ground, however fashion may have perverted the general taste.”

And, in fact, Mr. Valacort was in raptures with his niece, and promised himself much delight in watching the impression her unaffected graces would make upon the world, as well as the impression of the world upon her pure and natural mind.

“ Just see who’s dead and married ; and glance my eye over the lie of the day as an opening for conversation,” said Mrs. Valacort, as she rapidly skimmed the newspaper, which her husband

had put into her hand; "and then to business! By breakfasting at this early hour, I escape the interruption of breakfast-visitors, and settle all the engagements for the day *a tête reposée*; otherwise one gets into fifty scrapes!—Reach me the *Who's-at-home?* my dear," pointing to a cedar-wood substitute for vulgar card-racks which stood upon the *chiffoniere*, "let's see what parties I missed going to last night, and whether any thing beyond the usual apology is required."

"What may the *usual* apology be?" thought Emily, who conceived the apology to imply some explanation of the hindrance; but, determined not to tease her aunt, or expose her own ignorance by more questions than she could help, she waited in silence for her instructions, and was somewhat surprised at the concise and cavalier style of the printed cards of excuse, of which she was directed to fill up the blanks.

“ And is this all the civility required for breaking an engagement ?” Emily asked.

“ Oh ! quite sufficient, except on particular occasions ; here are two that require a civil lie, so I shall write the notes myself. I have not been to one of their assemblies this winter, and they will soon be giving balls, so I must keep in favour.”

It was like a new language to Emily, at least, very certainly, they were new ideas. “ The age for dancing is not as limited here, then, as I’ve been told it used to be in France, where no woman danced after thirty !” she observed ; rather sorry to think her aunt should retain such a juvenile taste.

“ But, then, you might have been told also, that *thirty* was apt to be very slow in its approaches ; however, my dancing days were over long before that prescribed term ; I always disliked it.”

“ Then, is not a ball a very dull thing for a mere looker-on ? ”

“ O no ! I should take it very ill not to be asked. They are always select, — and an elegant supper ! Though, upon recollection, as I give balls myself, I shall not be overlooked, so a printed card will do.”

“ Give balls when one has no young people ! and go to them without liking to dance ! What will my mother say when she hears of it all ? ” thought the wondering girl.

Notes without number poured in while this employment was going on ; and reading, canvassing, and answering, filled up the time till the carriage was announced.

“ Now for dress-makers, milliners, and jewellers to equip you properly for morning and evening exhibitions. I perceive you are behind-hand in modes at the Priory,” said Mrs. Valacort.

“ I am very sorry to give you so much

additional trouble," Emily replied; "however, that will be but for once; and I quite rejoice that I came in time to help you through this wonderful influx of notes."

"It is pretty much the same every day," she answered carelessly; "but with regularity I get through it all. Regularity is the soul of business! If I indulged in the customary breakfast hour of one or two o'clock, I should always be behind-hand."

They now hastened to milliners and dress-makers innumerable. Some excelled in one thing, some in another. At Rundell and Bridges, an elegant and complete assortment of pearls was selected, with which Mrs. Valacort presented Emily in her uncle's name; adding some valuable trinkets and ornaments in her own. She was really vain of her niece's beauty, and eager to set it off to the best advantage; and all was done with so much kindness and good-will, that, although

distressed by the costliness of the presents, a high gratification arose from the affection that prompted the gift.

“ Now we shall just get home by luncheon-time,” said Mrs. Valacort ; and Emily rejoiced in the unexpected comfort of the morning’s business being so soon over ; but here she found herself widely mistaken.

No one happening to drop in at the moment, luncheon was soon expedited. On Emily’s testifying surprise at the splendid display of it, her aunt said, “ There is always a hot thing or two served since mutton-chops have come into royal favour ; and as we are occasionally honoured with royal visitors, it is well to be prepared. Now,” she continued, “ go and equip yourself in some of your new purchases. The barouche will be at the door presently. We must make a few morning calls, — not many, on account of dining early, that we may get

to the ancient music. I'll make out the list while you change your dress."

Emily obeyed; and satisfied herself that morning calls could only be on intimate friends; so that would not recur every day, any more than shopping.

Some visitors having been admitted, delayed their setting forth again till near four. "See, my dear, whether the barouche is at the door?" said her aunt, gathering her matters together.

"I suppose they conclude it too late for visiting," said Emily, looking out, "and expect us only to take an airing, for they have let down the head."

"Too late! it's exactly *la belle heure!* and I always have the head down in tolerable weather. No time for airings! I never can accomplish airing, but on a Sunday!" Mrs. Valacort replied.

"And shan't we be sadly stared at in the streets in an open carriage?"

"Look along the street, you little rustic!" laughing, "and you will see an

open carriage of some description or other at every door. Never fear my making myself particular, Emily !”

“ My dear aunt, I must not venture to open my mouth before strangers, I shall make you so ashamed of my ignorance.”

“ There will be full as much cause for pride as shame, in having such a pretty creature to produce !” replied Mrs. Valacort, looking at her with complacency and delight.

Emily, though feeling abashed at hearing so much of her looks, had, however, too much sense and true modesty to provoke farther praise by disqualifying speeches, and simply answered, “ I am very grateful for your partiality, my aunt.”

As her eye fell upon the list of visits, she rather wondered at the number of *intimates* ; but determined to betray no more ignorance, she made no observation.

After about a dozen 'not at home's,' Mrs. Valacort said, "If we continue in such high luck as this, we shall get on better than I had hoped!"

"High luck in missing one's friends!" thought Emily; but she was silent.

"But I just recollect," resumed her aunt, "that your hoop was to be brought home; and I must give you time for a practice, before you dress for dinner."

"A practice! — Of what?"

"Of the management of your hoop. I have no objection to bringing out an Evelina; but I mustn't have you quite a *Ninette a la cour*."

This might have been Greek for any thing Emily understood of it; but she concluded, 'she should see,' as she had been told on other occasions; and Mrs. Valacort, unconscious of her ignorance, said no more.

Be it remembered, Emily was not born in the days of hoops; and of a court-

dress she had no conception, not having been in London since her childhood.

They continued in high luck ; wiped off a long score of names from the list ; and found the hoopmaker awaiting their return.

Nothing could equal the amazement of Emily, when she found, that to be fit to appear at Court, it was necessary to get into a machine that would make her nearly as broad as she was high. " Is there no possible exemption from this ?" she exclaimed in dismay ; " I shall stick in every door-way !"

" That is just what you are to practise to avoid," said Mrs. Valacort.

This practice, indeed, seemed to Emily the most ludicrous operation that ever was thought of ; but the hoopmaker assured her it was what all the young ladies were obliged to submit to before their presentation, " ever since the preposterous Grecian lankness had come into fashion ; but she remembered the time

when no lady could appear any where without a hoop twice or three times the circumference of this, — and a most becoming majestic air it had !” said the old woman, “ just like a man-of-war in full sail, as I have heard the gentlemen say when I have been trying them on their ladies.”

This harangue was almost as entertaining to Mrs. Valacort as to her niece, having strongly in her mind two recent instances of the majesty so described — neither of whom, however, caused her to join in the reprobation of Grecian lankness. “ But what would have become of you, Emily ?” she said, “ in the former birth-day balls, when country-dances were danced in such a whalebone incumbrance.”

“ I should have become, what I am very much afraid will be my fate now, very ridiculous ! Do, my dear aunt, let me off from this terrible drawing-room business ; and suffer me to take my chance of such of your acquaintance as will ad-

mit me without it. You can't imagine how I shall enjoy being left at home sometimes."

"Impossible! notice has been given to the lady in waiting."

Mr. Valacort brought home two or three members to dinner — The House having broken up unexpectedly; Lord Leonard Ormsby was one of them. The pleasure expressed on both sides at meeting, led Mrs. Valacort to set him down as her niece's admirer; and she was by no means dissatisfied with the discovery.

The conversation at dinner turned upon some important question that had been lately debated; and Lord Leonard said, "I was quite vexed at the poor figure Belmont made."

"We thought better of him when he was one of us," replied his neighbour smiling; "but let me tell you, it's a cursed awkward thing when a man is bound to support a measure against his own opinion of it."

“Aye!” said another, “he fairly told us at the club it was all a d——d job; but he was expected to speak, and couldn’t help himself.”

Emily, ever in some degree disconcerted by the name of Belmont, experienced a sense of grief and mortification at every new instance of his dereliction from those virtues with which her fond imagination had for so many years adorned him. The feeling manifested itself in her expressive countenance, so as to attract the observation, and excite the curiosity of Lord Leonard; but he knew not how to interpret it.

Mrs. Valacort rose from table on the removal of the desert, saying, “I can’t stop to give you coffee, lest we should be too late for the ancient music.”

“You will have lost the best half of that as it is!” was observed.

“The second act is always quite enough for me!” she replied.

Emily, to whom the idea of the

highly-finished style in which she had been told this music was performed was delightful in the extreme, could have wished her aunt less easily satisfied.

“ If music is really such an object to you, I’ll get you an order of admission to the Monday-morning rehearsals, provided you don’t expect me to go with you,” said Mrs. Valacort to her.

“ No, pray don’t!” cried Emily, “ mornings are far too precious to be sacrificed to mere amusement, however strong the temptation.”

“ Aye, true; duties ought to go first,” said Mrs. Valacort, “ and it is difficult enough to find time for them in London.” Emily began to be aware that words in London did not exactly bear the signification they did in the country.

“ Now I shall set you down at home,” said Mrs. Valacort, as they got into the carriage after the concert; and you may order up the sandwich-tray, for I shall shirk Lady Marsden’s supper; only just

show myself at a couple of houses where I have been deficient all the winter, and be with you presently ; for I shall have to rout out early to-morrow morning, on account of our *friseur*, he's in such request on court-days ; he must be caught as he may. Don't wait for me, however, in case I meet with unexpected delays, you poor sleepy thing ! you look quite tired now ; I had forgot your being used to go to bed with the chickens."

The more kindness her aunt showed and expressed for her, the greater was Emily's regret at the hourly encreasing conviction of her being the most dissipated woman in the world.

On the following morning, by eleven o'clock, Monsieur Pompon and his attendant made their appearance. Jenny ran up laughing : " I declare, Ma'am, if I didn't think here was company coming, and it's Mounseer, the hair-dresser, in a gig ; and Mrs. Valacort sends word, as you are to take him first, if you please."

Pompon being admitted, set his aid-de-camp to work, to put in Papillottes ; opened his *Cartons*, and began displaying feathers and flowers in such profusion as quite alarmed Emily's quiet taste. " As simple as may be, not to appear particular, if you please, Monsieur — This pearl bandeau, of course, and a feather or two, if necessary, — but no flowers," she said.

He admitted the elegance of pearls and feathers, without flowers ; and began placing the feathers. When he had got the length of three, she wanted to stop his hand ; but he assured her it would be *absolument mesquin* ; so she reluctantly suffered him to proceed to five ; but, as he still went on selecting more, she became quite refractory. He appealed to Madame. Jenny was deputed with the appeal. She brought back word that Pompon dressed the Ladies Dangerville, who were the models of taste. Pompon declared they never had fewer than nine ;

and frequently fourteen. Upon this Emily started from under his hands; and flew to Mrs. Valacort. "My dear aunt, he really is going to make a Peruvian Cacique of me! Are not five feathers quite enough for every possible purpose but flying?"

"If it distresses you so very much, your head may certainly pass. They are well put on, and become you."

Away ran Emily. "Put up your box, Monsieur; not another shall find place upon my poor loaded head. I shall have trouble enough to bring these safe back "

Pompon shrugged his shoulders; begged it might be understood that he was not *responsable*. Mademoiselle was *si belle* that she might certainly dispense with what she thought proper, and be *a ravir*; but he could not help observing, that *la decence sembloit exiger*, that *une presentation*, should have its full complement of feathers.

Emily engaged to acquaint *him* of the incongruity to whomever it might concern.

Next came Madame Clinquant, who had been sufficiently struck with Emily, to expect great credit from dressing her. She had paid particular attention to the dress, and now came to see it put on herself. Pompon being gone, she and Emily were sent for into Mrs. Valacort's dressing-room. The circumstance of dressing before strangers was not wholly devoid of distress to the poor novice, till her aunt on perceiving it told her laughingly, "She was in high luck to escape so; had I not borne in mind your rusticity, half-a-dozen of my intimates would have had leave to attend this operation," she said.

Emily certainly felt comparative relief in that idea; with very earnest entreaty, she also had the comfort of obtaining a little more of covering than had been intended, and when all was said and

done, the superintendant of the *toilette* declared herself perfectly satisfied *que Mademoiselle effaçeroit toutes les beautés de la cour*; while poor Emily, who had never before beheld Court or court-dress, thought there never was such another preposterous figure as they had made of her.

As they were about to encounter the crowd on the stair case at B—house Mrs. Valacort said, “Now keep close to me, Emily! and, for heaven’s sake, don’t be civil!”

Emily was far from taking in the full import of these words, which, fairly translated, implied, “Be as rude as in a bear-garden;” she conceived they simply meant, not civilly keeping back to let others pass. Though she had been somewhat dismayed by the crossed halberds of the beef-eaters at the door, she stuck close to her aunt, and got up stairs without much difficulty; but when they came to the formidable door-way of the first apartment, it was a very different affair indeed!

Mrs. Valacort was an excellent manœuvrer in a crowd, and made her way with great dexterity and little scruple ; but for the warfare of hoops and elbows to which she was now exposed, poor Emily was not at all prepared, and her motions were becoming retrograde, when one more than commonly determined elbow came into such forcible contact with her side, that the pain turned her faint, and she shrunk entirely from the contest, by which means she was soon shoved back to the head of the stairs. Lord Cranmore was just ascending them ; with an exclamation of astonishment, mixed with alarm at her pale and distressed appearance, he caught hold of her, as she seemed scarce able to support herself ; and with extreme difficulty, and very little respect for lappets and trimmings, he got her down the stair, and depositing her in a window of one of the passages, he threw it up to give her air, and then went to obtain a glass of water by means of one of the beef-eaters.

By the time he returned, she found herself so far recovered, that she proposed making another attempt with his assistance ; but he assured her it would be fruitless — there could be no chance of her joining her aunt, before she must have been spoken to, and passed on — but if she would allow him to attend her back into the lower-apartments, he would then endeavour to find Mrs. Valacort, and inform her of what had happened. To this she agreed, and, having seated her in safety, he left her.

Meanwhile Mrs. Valacort missing her, and guessing in part what had occurred, had, however, no option, being now forced forward, whether she would or no, to where the Q—— stood. The presentations were so numerous, that not one in ten was spoken to, but of Mrs. Valacort, a gracious enquiry was made after her pretty niece, which afforded her the means of explaining what she conjectured to have happened. This

was followed by a remark upon the distinct character of Miss Villars's beauty from that of her sister, Mrs. Delmere, which astonished Mrs. Valacort, not at the moment recollecting, by how much, "in a great matter or a small," her M—— was known to be the best informed woman of the United Kingdoms, and aware that Emily had scarcely yet been seen: delighted, however, to find Mrs. Delmere's seclusion had not obliterated the impression of her charms, (for who can help being flattered by the proof of living in R—l memory?) she not only replied by an elegantly-turned compliment, which, from the fear of mutilating it, shall not be here repeated — but she made it her very earnest request on her return home, that her husband should absent himself from the House next day upon a question, where he must necessarily vote against ministry: not, however, having exposed himself to the same fascination, he resisted her wish.

Well is it that Princes are not more aware to what dangers affability and smiles would expose the consciences of their subjects.

Whilst Lord Cranmore was gone in quest of Mrs. Valacort, Lord Leonard Ormsby and Lord Belmont had, almost at the same moment, discovered Emily, and stationed themselves as her protectors, till her ambassador should bring word what her aunt might wish her to do.

Belmont's expression of joyful surprise on beholding her bordered so much on the familiar levity which she considered an insult, as highly to displease her. She answered him with cold and distant civility, and endeavoured to confine her conversation solely to Lord Leonard.

Mrs. Valacort soon came to her, Lord Cranmore having luckily met with her coming down the stair, and explained poor Emily's misadventure. " And we have nothing left for it now, but to find

our way to the carriage as fast as we can," said Mrs. Valacort : " any further attempt is out of the question."

Lord Belmont put himself forward to offer his arm to Emily, but with calm dignity she passed it by, and took Lord Leonard Ormsby's. Conscious of the repulse, but satisfied that Emily was not Lord Leonard's object, he prudently gave way, without seeming to perceive it; and said to Mrs. Valacort, " Lady Sabina is not yet informed of Miss Villars's being in town; but will, I am certain, wish, with your leave, to take an early opportunity of paying her respects in Stanhope-street. Meanwhile, I can answer for the pleasure with which she will, at any time, supply your place as chaperon to Laura's friend; the sisters go every where together. I must now retrace my steps, or I shall be too late to pay my court;" and, with a submissive bow to Emily, he passed on.

“ Not being in office,” said Lord Leonard, “ I need not mind, though I were to lose the opportunity of paying my court ; so I shall not relinquish my charge, till I see you safely out of this bustle.”

“ And I could wish,” said Mrs. Valacort, “ it were your farther pleasure to come and ascertain Emily’s being alive at dinner-time after this morning’s adventure, and prevail with Lord Cranmore to join you.”

The brothers, with evident pleasure, accepted the invitation.

“ Didn’t I warn you against civility ? you little, incorrigible rustic !” said Mrs. Valacort, as they drove home.

“ I do assure you, my dear aunt, it was self-preservation that obliged me to give way. My sides are quite bruised with the elbows they encountered. I hope I shall never have to fight my way through a quality mob again ; my home-

bred habits are not up to such encounters."

"You must never attempt then to stay a ball-supper," said Mrs. Valacort.

"I'm sure I would give up all the pleasure of the dance afterwards, which is always the best of the night, rather than pay such a price for it. Had I not been so fortunately recognised by Lord Cranmore, I am persuaded I should have fainted in the midst of them."

"Those two brothers seem to take a very obliging interest in you," was the playful reply. "I perceive there may be a very agreeable little spice of coquetry mixed up with rural simplicity. I did not suspect its existence in your demure ways, Emily.

"Rest assured you will never find it: I should hate myself, were I capable of what I so strongly reprobate," she answered very gravely, the late mortifying discovery of Laura's turn that way recurring fully to her mind.

“Nay, child, you need not look so desperately grave about the matter: I am accusing you of nothing very heinous; but I shall hope to be let into your secrets in time, Emily, and then you may rely upon my never making sport of what may distress you.”

“I have no secrets but what you may command, whenever affection shall prompt your enquiry into them.”

“Well! I shall let you rest now, that you may recover yourself by dinner-time, for we have some more men coming besides your lords, and you look quite pale and fagged.”

“The getting off all my paraphernalia will recover me as much as any thing, for I seriously ache under the weight of it.”

“Poor child!” laughing: “Yes, you may be disencumbered of the hoop, and, indeed, by the state of your drapery, from it all; for I perceive the fatal effects of the conflict on the tassels and festoons.”

“ And the feathers may go too, I hope.”

“ No ; the feathers cannot be dispensed with. All the court heads will be exhibited at Mrs. Waller’s assembly to-night ; and as we failed in the actual presentation, it is the more necessary to show it was intended.”

“ And these dangling lappets : consider I have not been taught like Lady Sabina ; I shall have them in my soup.”

“ Chalmers shall pin them up, so as to make a very pretty addition to the head-dress ; they must remain.”

Poor Emily, obliged to acquiesce, was, however, agreeably surprised, upon catching her own figure in the pier-glass as she passed it, to observe how much less ludicrous it appeared to her than when she had set out : indeed, she now felt a very comfortable consciousness, that it was by far the least extravagant attire her eyes had rested on the whole morn-

ing, for even her aunt's plume greatly exceeded her own.

Emily felt no slight enjoyment in the hours of quiet, which solicitude for her looks had obtained her, when she heard how incessantly the knocker kept going, nor could she imagine whence the visitors could all come, as she believed the crowd at court to have comprised the whole fashionable world, till set right by the information, "that there had not been a creature there, except those in office, and who had presentations to make."

She was much gratified, upon entering the drawing-room, to find her brother among the dinner guests.

Mrs. Valacort, observing the remains of fatigue on Emily's countenance, kindly said, "I think, my dear, we will cut every thing to-night, except Mrs. Waller's assembly, and there we need not go till towards twelve, so you will have plenty of time to recover."

“ I didn’t know there was any other engagement on hand for to-night,” replied Emily, not too happy in the prospect of setting out in quest of amusement at midnight.

“ Half-a-dozen, I dare swear,” said Mrs. Valacort : “ the catches and glees for one, though that I generally cut ; I only put my name down to please the old Duchess of Squeakem, who patronises the leader.”

“ Ladies are never bound to know their engagements before-hand, I believe,” said Lord Cranmore : “ I see my mother and sister look over the at-home’s for the evening, when the carriage comes to the door.”

“ Yes ; and select those that promise best in point of company : that’s the way,” said Mrs. Valacort.

“ But then don’t you give offence where you don’t go?” Emily asked.

“ Oh, no ! all that is understood, and one tells some civil lie, if it should happen to cut out the same person too often,

and that she is of sufficient consequence to be worth keeping well with."

Emily made no reply, but Lord Cranmore read her thoughts in her countenance, and was delighted to mark her evident dissent from forms established by selfishness and impertinence. Mrs. Valacort was not, however, remarkable either for the one or the other; but she fell into the prevailing ease of the day from habit, without ever troubling herself to reflect upon its tendency. As they were taking their coffee, she said to her niece, "Now look into the who's-at-home, and let us ascertain what we are giving up to-night."

"You don't seem to follow the usual mode of selection," Emily said; "for here are marchionesses and countesses given up, and we are going to a simple Mrs."

Lord Leonard smiled, and with something of an arch glance at Mrs. Valacort, said, "You will soon become aware,

Miss Villars, of the triumph of ton over title in the *beau-monde*."

"I put my aunt's patience to the test every hour of the day by my ignorance," said Emily.

"We shall all be inclined, I believe, to deem your ignorance your ornament," said Lord Cranmore.

"Come! now let's have a quiet rubber!" cried Mrs. Valacort, ordering the card-table; and Lord Leonard and two more sat down with her to whist.

"French fives? short?" — the gentlemen assented.

"Now, what does that mean?" Emily asked Lord Cranmore.

"That's more than I can tell," he replied: "what does it mean, Leonard?"

"That a couple of deals may transfer forty pounds of Mrs. Valacort's property into my pocket," said Lord Leonard.

Emily shuddered, and turned pale. "My aunt is then also a gambler!" was her distressing reflection.

"Are you musical, Emily?" asked Mr. Valacort.

"I don't suppose I could have any claim to be reckoned so here, but my father sometimes says I draw his thoughts from his gouty limbs by my performance."

"If you drew them from his Newspaper it might be a greater boast," said Mr. Valacort. "Is your father as great a politician as ever, Henry?"

"He could not be more zealous if the weal of the nation turned upon his vote."

"I wish he would bite you — I want you in Parliament, Henry."

"When I perceive the good that honest intentions can produce there, I shall be very willing — but Emily, have you not tried that fine instrument in the next room yet?"

"I meant it yesterday morning, and came down an hour before breakfast-time for the purpose, but found the shutters just unbarring, and the housemaids in possession of the room — and since that there has not been a leisure moment."

"You will find your time very fully occupied during your stay," Lord Cranmore observed.

"*Filled up* you mean!" she returned, with a smile.

"I stand corrected: occupation bears a different meaning in your vocabulary, I know; but will you not take advantage of this moment's respite to try the instrument?"

"Shall I not disturb the whist table?"

"We shan't hear you Emily," said her aunt.

"Speak for yourself, Mrs. Valacort," said Lord Leonard.

"Do your utmost then, Emily! for he's my antagonist," laughing.

"Shut the folding doors, Henry! 'tis not fair to disturb their game;" said Mr. Valacort.

The doors were shut; and Emily charmed her uncle by her tones and her expression. He was passionately fond of music, and no bad performer on the vio-

loncello — “ I had no conception of so delightful a performance as this !” he exclaimed. “ I shall give you little rest when I catch you at home, I promise you !”

“ My aunt does not intend that should be too often, as far as I can judge,” replied Emily.

“ A little rest might, however, be desirable just at present, if Emily’s pale looks speak truth,” said Henry.

“ You did well to call my attention to them,” observed his uncle ; “ I should have had no mercy, and Caroline would not have forgiven me, she’s so anxious Emily should look her best, on her first appearance ; so let’s adjourn.”

“ Lord bless me !— how you have been fagging her !” cried Mrs. Valacort, when they returned into the room ; “ Do fetch your work, for country ladies always work, and sit down quietly here by me, and neither speak nor move till it is time to go,—and order tea, Lionel ! that will help to revive her.”

Emily went for her work, and brought it to the corner of the table where the candle stood ; but, unused to attend to where her feathers might reach, in stooping to her work, she set them on fire. Lord Cranmore was, at that moment, approaching to bid her good night ; when, perceiving the blaze, he rushed forward, exclaiming, “ My God ! her beautiful hair ! ” — and clapped his opera-hat upon her head. The conflagration had been so instantaneous that Emily herself was unconscious of it ; and her sudden start and shriek, together with Lord Leonard’s burst of “ What the devil, Cranmore ! are you mad ? ” turned all eyes at once to her appearance with the opera-hat upon her head. The astonishment excited produced a mixture of agitated surprise and laughter ; and great approbation of the judicious manœuvre, when the removal of the hat displayed the consumed feathers and unsinged hair ; which in Emily, however, altogether bordered so nearly upon hys-

terics that Mrs. Valacort immediately rung for her maid, and advising her to retire, prudently determined against taking her into company that night: observing, after she was gone, " I could not bear to have her seen to such disadvantage, after all the expectations that have been raised about her beauty ; so, if you will be the bearer of my excuses, Lionel, and tell what has happened, we may go on with our whist ; provided my beaux prove staunch, that is to say ; or if not, you might pick me up a recruit or two where you are going."

The gentlemen professed themselves at her disposal " till two ;" Lord Leonard added, " and then I must look in at the Duchess of Darwent's supper."

" Very true !" said Mrs. Valacort, " she mentioned it to me at the drawing-room ; and the various worries about Emily, put it quite out of my head ; come back for me then, Lionel, and I may look in there also."

And so the matter was arranged.

CHAP. IX.

THE following day Henry attended Mrs. Valacort's breakfast table.

"The morning is so very fine," he said, "that I think a walk in the Park will do Emily good, and prepare her for the business of the day."

"I protest that's a bright thought, Henry!" Mrs. Valacort replied; "for see what a rag she looks with the adventures of yesterday! they may talk of the health of the country, but I'll pit a thorough-paced town Miss, against any half-dozen country girls for standing fatigue! You may lounge about Kensington-gardens, and I'll excuse your shopping with me to-day, provided you are back in time for luncheon, and the morning visits that must be made.

“ Shopping again !” cried Emily, “ I thought we had done all yesterday that could be wanted in that way, for a month to come.”

Mrs. Valacort laughed : “ That’s a business ‘ still beginning never ending,’ as you’ll find by experience, but I shall not insist upon your sharing it when fresh air may be more beneficial to you. — I have appointed James to be your *Laquais de place* while you stay ; so tell him, Bonaire, to be ready to attend Miss Villars in an hour’s time.”

Emily’s eyes sparkled with pleasure at the substitution of an agreeable walk to the miseries of shopping : the Park had been an object of interest to her from her first glimpse of it out of the balcony, and she had almost despaired of ever being allowed time to enjoy it. She would willingly have dispensed with the appendage of the servant, and couldn’t understand why her brother was not a sufficient protection ; but was over-ruled by her

aunt, who astonished her with the information, that the protecting her might bring her brother into difficulties, if the respectability of a livery servant did not ward off the danger of insult. This being settled,

“ I hope, dear aunt,” said Emily enquiringly, “ fortune continued favourable to you, after the disturbance I so awkwardly caused at the card table, last night?”

“ No; I lost; but nothing worth speaking of: I never play deep.”

Poor Emily, whose slumbers had been broken by melancholy reflections on Mrs. Valacort’s turn for gambling, brightened up. “ Then, it was a piece of wit of Lord Leonard Ormsby’s, to say that two deals might transfer forty pounds of your property into his pocket.”

“ No, little simpleton! he said true enough; but that’s not called deep play! deep play goes by hundreds, and I

never so much as bet a pony on the rubber."

"The idea of that bet, is taken, I conclude, from the Comte de Grammont!" said Henry, "and I hope they follow up his joke of 'giving a horse for card money', by allotting a colt, or a donkey at least, for that purpose!"

"Not quite so spirited as that!" returned Mrs. Valacort, amused with the allusion; "but I suppose you know a pony means a half rouleau."

"I am obliged to confess," resumed Henry, "that the explanation leaves me as much in the dark as the expression."

"Mercy defend us, Henry! what Gothic ignorance of club terms! that all this should be Hebrew and Greek to Emily is excusable, but I declare if you do not get better initiated in worldly knowledge, I shall blush to own you

* See Memoires du Comte de Grammont.

for my nephew ; why then, a rouleau in the days of guineas — ”

“ May I not plead an extenuating alibi there ? ” interrupted Henry, “ I think I was not brought to light in those days. ”

“ But the name has remained in full force, though the specie has disappeared ; so your salvo will not exonerate you ; know then, that a rouleau meant fifty guineas, neatly put up in paper, sealed at both ends, and circulated from hand to hand, upon good faith, at the card tables without counting ; of course, your comprehension can now reach to the discovery that a half rouleau will be five-and-twenty ! ”

“ Why nearly ; but still how it came to be called a pony ? ”

“ O ! that arose from a joke at one of the clubs ; a member declared at his entrance, that he was determined not to rise without winning a rouleau, as that would exactly purchase a horse he had

just seen ; the game broke up, however, when he had only won half a rouleau. "Now you must be content with a pony!" observed a wit, and from that time the name has passed current. So now, Henry, do give yourself the credit of knowing something about clubs, as opportunity may offer of retailing this anecdote."

"How lamentable !" said Emily to her brother, in their subsequent walk, "to find my aunt one of the most dissipated women in London !"

"You do her injustice in calling her so," he replied ; "for a woman of ton I have heard her reckoned quiet."

"Dearest Henry ! what then may the dashers be ?"

Henry gave her such an account of some of them, as almost made her hair stand on end, though it imparted a degree of comfort respecting Mrs. Valacort.

They had not proceeded far, when they were joined by Lord Cranmore. Having called to enquire for Emily, after

her fright, he had been informed by Mrs. Valacort that she had sent her to recover a little bloom in the Park.

An extraordinary flashy equipage caught their eye. "Lady S—— S—— out at this early hour!" exclaimed Lord Cranmore, "when only nurses and children can be the expected beholders!"

Emily was surprised and amused with the explanation of the splendid decorations of the carriage. "That name," continued she, "brings to my recollection the invalid children Lord Leonard took such an interest in at Your Lordship's cottage, pretty creatures! we used to admire them when we met them in our walks! I hope they quite recovered their health."

"No; I can't say they—Oh! yes, quite!—that is—I beg pardon, I don't very well know," stammered out Lord Cranmore, in extreme confusion.

The name having caught Henry's ear likewise, who had been giving way to a

fit of absence, now starting from it, he exclaimed, "A whimsical-enough circumstance occurred yesterday, when I went to enquire for Your Lordship at the Marquis of Kingsboro's: the porter, on casting his eye upon my card, said, if I had any very particular business, I might possibly meet with you at No. 10. Norfolk-Street. I certainly had no such plea; but wishing to see you, and thinking of no other Norfolk-Street than that I so constantly passed in my way to my chambers, I took my chance of finding you—"

"I was at the drawing-room," interrupted Lord Cranmore, precipitately, "most fortunately engaged in Miss Villars's service! did she tell you?" —

"O! yes; and I wished for an opportunity of making my acknowledgments yesterday after dinner, but something or other constantly came in the way."

"Not the smallest occasion for any thing of the sort!" again interrupted

Lord Cranmore, with increased confusion at having, in his eagerness to ward off the subject, forgotten that Henry had been present at all that passed at dinner relative to poor Emily's morning discomfiture.

"But I was going to tell you of my blunder," resumed the unconscious Henry: "When I got to No. 10. of Norfolk-Street, the Strand, I found the door of the house open, and a tradesman standing within; finding he was waiting the return of a servant, I waited likewise: in a minute, a little rosy-cheeked cherub popped her head out of the parlour, but, on seeing me, slammed the door to again, but not before I had caught sight of a very pretty-looking young woman, which convinced me I was wrong: I stopped, however, for the servant to direct me, but she could tell of no lord in that street; this was Mrs. Sidney's, and I might go into the parlour and ask her mistress, if I pleased, she

said; this gracious proposal I prudently declined. The girl spoke with a north-country accent, and did not seem much *au fait* of London manners, so I may do her mistress injustice; but you'll allow it took the agreeable turn of an adventure, if a more chivalrous wight than I can boast myself to be, had chosen to follow it up. I conclude *new* Norfolk-Street is where the porter meant to send me."

Lord Cranmore had dropped behind during this speech, and as Henry turned to appeal to him for the direction, he suddenly put his handkerchief up to his face, saying, in a half whisper, "Have the goodness to make my excuse to Miss Villars; my nose has just gushed out with blood!" And he darted through the nearest gate, and disappeared.

Emily overhearing the whisper, attributed his evident confusion to finding himself unwell, and Henry had not particularly attended to it.

As they returned from their walk, wishing to show his sister Grosvenor-Square, he had brought her out at Grosvenor-gate. Passing along South Audley-street, they found themselves in a crowd at the door of a poulterer's; the tone of a very distressed female voice caught their ear, and they enquired what was the matter?

"Matter enough, sir;" answered a respectable looking tradesman—"These are honest people as ever broke bread, but they serve the quality for the most part, and as I tell my wife, that goes farther in honour than in cash; she's mighty apt, sir, to think it a great matter if she can clap a title down in her book."

"Well, but what has happened here?"

"Why, as far as I can find, the bailiffs wants to take the man to prison, and its my belief its a malicious arrest; for the wife, she showed by the books as there's more money due to them, by hundreds, than this here paltry debt; and the chil-

dren they cried very hard, and the bailiffs doesn't seem so savage-like as some are ; so they've agreed to wait till the shop-boy goes round the corner, to see if he can get payment from a customer."

Just then the lad returned, with a dismal countenance,—“ The housekeeper's not within, and the squire's rode out on horseback, and madam have got one of the r——l family visiting, and there's all the grand servants in the hall, and the lady can't be spoken with."

“ Aye, that's the way,” resumed the tradesman ; “ never can be spoken with when a poor shopkeeper.”—

Here the poor woman's screams of vexation and disappointment broke into his observation. “ It must be the will of God !” she cried, wringing her hands, “ for sure it must, that poor Thomas should go to prison ; for these here customers used to be the best pay that ever was. I can't hear of no ruin going on—”

“ Does my uncle deal with these people, James ?” Emily asked eagerly.

“ Yes, ma’am ; he’s our poulterer.”

“ It must—it must be them she is speaking of!” exclaimed Emily—“ What is the name of the family you sent to ?”

“ Squire Valacort’s, ma’am.”

“ Oh, for Heaven’s sake, Henry ! entreat the bailiffs to have patience while I go to my aunt.”

One of the bailiffs had actually some knowledge of the people, and was willing to give them all the chance he could ; so he readily listened to Henry’s persuasions, and prevailed with his associate to wait the result of the young lady’s interference.

“ God bless you ! you’re as good natured as you’re pretty ;” cried some of the bye-standers, as they made way for Emily along the pavement. She rather flew than ran ; her mind wholly engrossed with what she conceived to be a case of (alas, that it were !) *unparal-*

leled hardship. She neither heeded the r—l carriage at the door, nor the servants in the hall, nor yet the information Bonaire was endeavouring to impress upon her, of the visitor that was with Mrs. Valacort : but hurrying eagerly on, rushing past Bonaire across the backstairs which communicated with the boudoir, she exclaimed, as she opened the door, “ O, my dear aunt ! your poor poulterer, Gibson ! ” —

Mrs. Valacort, quite shocked at this total disregard of etiquette, interrupted her with an air of some displeasure. “ Is it possible, Emily, you did not know who was here ? ” and immediately begged leave to present her, making an apology, at the same time, for her total ignorance of the rules “ of high breeding.”

The D—— was literally kept silent by his surprise. It was not, indeed, well possible to imagine a more striking object than she, at that moment, exhibited ; her beauty heightened in the extreme by

the glow of exercise; her fine eyes sparkling with strong unaffected interest for the objects of her solicitude; the artless simplicity of her manner, and the excessive and almost overpowering confusion that followed upon her being made sensible of her indecorum, was altogether so perfectly new to him, that he actually stood for a minute at a loss how to address her.

Without waiting for it, however, she recurred to her object. "May I not speak to you for one instant in the next room? indeed the case admits of no delay"—she whispered, as Mrs. Valacort drawing back, kept repeating, "Impossible, Emily! impossible!"

"It seems to be an act of compassion that Miss Villars has so much at heart," said the D——; "and if it cannot be imparted in my presence, I must revert to my Italian breeding, and with a '*levo l'incommodo*,' however unwillingly, make my exit."

Emily, recovering some composure from the affability of this speech, replied, "I am quite sure that the urgency of the distress will plead my excuse with your R—H—for relating it in your presence;" and with the utmost simplicity and feeling, she proceeded to state what had happened.

The D—— paid the greatest attention to her little narrative.

"Depend upon it, Emily, there's some imposition in the business," said Mrs. Valacort; "we owe no bill to that amount."

"The poor woman appealed to her books."

"It was but last week I gave Walker money for the month's bills."

"But the boy said she was not within, and she may not yet have paid them."

"I am really quite shocked at entering into all this before your R———; will you forgive me if I satisfy this ank-

ious child's solicitude by ordering my housekeeper into the next room?"

"I earnestly request you would; Miss Villars has deeply interested me in the result; and I am not wholly free from apprehension that I may be found in those books. It strikes me that I know the name."

Bonaire brought word Mrs. Walker was not within.

"Oh! good heavens! the poor man will be dragged to prison!" cried Emily, in an agony.

"It would be no great matter to advance the sum," said Mrs. Valacort, "if I had not unluckily emptied my card-purse last night, and been prevented going to my bankers yesterday."

Emily gave a sigh to the manner in which the money had gone. "And that's called not playing deep," thought she, "when the sum would have saved a family from ruin!"

“ Besides,” continued her aunt, “ I am not at all sure we do deal with these people ; you are not up to London tricks, Emily.”

“ James said they were your poulterers ; and don’t they sign a receipt when they are paid ? Might we not refer to that ?”

“ Yes ; certainly,” replied Mrs. Valacort ; “ but I don’t know where to lay my hand upon the bill ; and this really is a shocking bore to his R—— ———.”

“ By no means. I have not had my interest so much awakened this long time ; and I feel it incumbent upon me to enquire whether any irregularity in my payments may have contributed to this distress ; I shall feel bound to make an atoning confession to Miss Villars at the Duchess of Castlehaven’s this evening, if I find it so. You propose being there, I hope,” he added, as he took his leave.

“ But still it may be hours before any good results from this ; and the poor man

will be dragged away in the meantime. What can be done?" cried Emily, in the greatest agitation.

"I really do not know," replied her aunt, "except ordering Walker to be sent to me the moment she returns."

"But, in the meanwhile, if you could just ascertain the date of the bills last paid. My uncle may happen to come in, and have money sufficient by him."

Emily was so very urgent, that Mrs. Valacort saw there was no escaping from the trouble she was so reluctant to take; and when she opened her secretaire, and Emily saw the state of chaos it was in, she no longer wondered at the difficulty of ascertaining the matter; for Mrs. Valacort by no means carried her visiting regularity into her household concerns.

One of the first bills that fell into her hand happened to be the poulterer's. "So far lucky, however," she exclaimed, "and see the date; — the very last week!"

"But I don't see it receipted!" said Emily.

"No! how is that? They are always paid and receipted before they are returned to me. This is some strange neglect. And here's the butcher's bill not receipted! What can this mean? 'Tis well you called my attention to the circumstance, Emily. It requires an explanation at any rate."

They were here most agreeably interrupted by Henry Villars. "Well, dear Emily, the poor people are rescued from their distress," he exclaimed; "and it really was quite a malicious arrest."

"But how?—How?"—cried she, eagerly.

"The D—— of —— stopped at the door, and sent in, to inquire of the woman whether he were owing any thing there? She showed him his name scratched out for a considerable bill the very last week. Then, said he graciously; I know nothing better to be done at present than to give you an order upon my

steward for fifty pounds in advance on the next bill, as that is the sum I hear you have to pay. It would have done your heart good, Emily, to see the silent tear of gratitude that trickled down the poor woman's cheek, for she could not speak ; — and the acclamations and shouts of the crowd. O that the great were aware how condescending benevolence becomes them !”

“ Well, then, I must forgive all the indecorums Emily has been guilty of this morning,” said Mrs. Valacort, “ since they have produced so good a result ; and now do let this troublesome business rest, child ! I am weary of the sight of these bills,” huddling them all together, and stuffing them back into the secretaire, “ we shall hear Walker's solution of the unreceipted ones. It would be an endless job to sort them all ; and I have to impart all the messages left for you during your walk. Did Lord Cranmore join you ? He was the first that called.”

“ He did, but was seized with a bleeding at the nose, and obliged to leave us,” said Emily.

“ Next came Sir Edward Arundel. I told him where he would find you.”

“ We saw nothing of him.”

“ No ; I suppose Lady Laura Belmont laid violent hands upon him. She and Lord Belmont also called at an hour so undue for them, I should scarce have supposed them out of bed ; but it was her impatience to see you, her brother said. How came you not to tell me, Emily, what intimate friends you and she were ?”

“ I have scarce had time to tell you any thing yet, my dear aunt,” Emily replied.

“ Sunday is a good gossiping day. During an airing in the Park you shall tell me every thing ; — but about Lady Laura I was going to say, I was surprised when she sent in her name to me ; for, to tell you the truth, she is no favourite of

mine. I have kept back from her for jilting a very worthy young man ; but, as *your* friend, I ——”

“ I have had no reason of late to think my friendship of much value to her ; so pray don't do any thing on my account,” said Emily, very much fearing Lord Belmont might be prompting this forwardness in his sister.

“ Well ; she left a message for you, however. She said, that she rides most days, and will call for you.”

“ But I have no horse in town,” Emily answered.

“ So I told her,” continued Mrs. Valacort, “ but Lord Belmont said, Lady Sabina was prohibited from riding at present ; and her horse is a very safe one, and quite at your service.”

“ O ! I can't accept of it, indeed,” cried Emily, with quickness.

“ You are afraid of riding in the Park, I see ; but there is nothing in it, really. Your uncle will attend you, once or twice,

till you get broke in ; and Lord Belmont volunteered his services at all times. There ! do fold these notes," tossing her some she had been writing during this conversation. " A-propos of Lord Belmont, though," she continued, " didn't I once hear something of a flirtation between you and him ? That would have been a very pretty match ! How came you to let him slip ? — Lord bless me, child ! how pale you are again become, now the glow of exercise has subsided. Just as I thought, you have taken too long a walk ; and I must leave you at home to recover, or I shall get no credit by you at all. Do, ring the bell for my carriage, Henry."

Emily availed herself of her aunt's interpretation of her paleness, and expressed herself thankful for being left at home.

" O ! and Lord Belmont apologised for his lady's not calling, being in a family-way, and much indisposed ; and

hoped you would wave ceremony, and all that; and Lady Laura wants you to go with her into their private box at Drury-Lane to-night. Lord! I had like to have forgot half."

"But I hope, I needn't go to the play without you, dear aunt."

"Needn't!" repeated Mrs. Valacort, laughing, "No; to be sure. It was meant as a great favour. Private boxes are in the utmost request. But it was very thoughtless in me not to decline that at once. You would never have been fit to go with me afterwards. So write your excuse; and then do keep quiet, and recover your looks. Goodbye! Walker not come in yet, Bonaire?"

Being answered in the negative, she departed.

CHAP. X.

LORD BELMONT, from the disappointment of not seeing Emily at Mrs. Waller's assembly the preceding evening, had been doubly anxious to attend Mrs. Valacort's breakfast-table next morning, to ascertain the means of meeting in the course of the various engagements of the day with *her*, who had now recovered all her power over his mind ; and he gave way to the impulse without a moment's consideration of those consequences from which he had once so conscientiously shrunk. He had now breathed a contaminated air; and it had blasted the feelings which the re-action of Emily's virtues, and not his own principles, had originally excited in his breast.

He knew his sister would prove an useful auxiliary ; so he had called upon her to accompany him. But although he routed her out so much before her usual breakfast-time, they were too late to catch Emily.

In justice to Laura, however, it must be said, that in this pursuit of her brother's, she was not a willing assistant ; her interest lay the other way. She was anxious to keep up a conjugal harmony that might defeat the Duke of Ulswater's views with Lady Sabina. She had bestowed much ineffectual ingenuity on devising the means of prolonging the deception, to which Lord Belmont's vanity had made him such a ready dupe. He had found all the so strongly painted partiality evaporate in discontent, at the first absurd whim with which he had objected to comply, after having indulged fifty equally unreasonable ; and heard his loving consort lament having given him the preference to another suitor, who

had lately come into an immense property, "and would, she was sure, have been upon his knees in humble adoration of her beauty and accomplishments, from morning till night; and have thought nothing too much that could have gratified her slightest wish: that was the sort of husband she felt herself entitled to expect." Laura, who had been present at this agreeable discussion, endeavoured to conciliate matters, by afterwards pointing out to him the unlimited blind indulgence to which her parents had accustomed her; and how naturally a first attempt at contradiction might provoke her to say what she was far from feeling. "Who was there that might not in a pet utter what they would give the world, upon a moment's reflection, to recal?" she asked.

"But where is her mind?" he would exclaim. "Good God, Laura! when I compare her insipid matter-of-fact conversation with the fulness, the variety, the

inexhaustible stores of Emily Villars's, I am ready to destroy myself."

"Lord! my dear brother, what unreasonable complaints! What man of fashion seeks a conversable companion in his wife? or could find time for conversation if she were so? If you had been to pass your life in the country indeed, it would have been another thing; but *here* — you have the most beautiful and most accomplished wife in England, whom the whole fashionable world looks up to, — whose alliance is an honour to us all; and because she is not a conceited blue stocking, you are dissatisfied. When you want conversation go to the Alfred; or if you wish for the relaxation of cards, to White's. There's no end of resources in London, without being dependent on a wife for them. And keep this in mind, Charles, if you neglect Lady Sabina, there will be plenty come forward to make her amends."

This last consideration had kept Lord Belmont's discontent within bounds, till the sight of Emily at Belmont Park had made him careless of consequences, by rekindling a flame that had only lain dormant. But, ah! how wide now of its original purity!

On the other hand, when Lady Sabina complained of her husband's coldness and neglect, Laura reverted to the established customs of the world, and that quintessence of decorum, Lady Saltland, who would never bear to have her son lay himself open to ridicule by public attentions to his wife.

"I'm sure I was a great fool, then, to marry, with the whole world at my feet, if neglect was to be the necessary consequence."

"But, my dear Sabina, haven't you the whole world at your feet still?"

"Yes; but then you know, the least little preference I were to show to any

body would immediately draw all the old cats upon my back."

"Preference! Certainly,—your true glory is in the *number* of your slaves. You must not allow yourself to show a *preference*, assuredly; and if I might advise, you should be particularly upon your guard against the Duke of Ulswater. He is said to be extremely insidious, and might alarm Charles."

"I should have no objection to create such an alarm, if it would make him behave better."

"That's a hazardous game to play, though; and the world is not apt to be indulgent to it."

Laura knew better than what she here advanced. The world is but too apt to be indulgent till the husband chooses to take the alarm; but this was before the Easter visit to the Park, and she had great hopes of securing the Duke to herself, if she could induce Lady Sabina to repulse him. When she afterwards,

however, played Henry Villars off upon him in vain, she began to fear the business was desperate; though, still unwilling to relinquish all hope, she continued to keep her invention upon the rack to conciliate matters between the right honourable pair.

In agreeing to Lord Belmont's proposal of visiting Emily, there was, however, the purpose of obtaining admission to those select parties, so long the objects of her ambition, to be answered; and, therefore, Laura assented without hesitation; and forced her way, by sending up her name, and a message for Emily respecting the play, which in common civility compelled Mrs. Valacort to admit her.

Finding Sir Edward Arundel there, she had seized upon him to walk with her and her brother down to the Horse Guards, "where he was going to attend his office," she said, "and she should want an escort back, as she did not like walking through the Park with a servant only."

Sir Edward having assured himself where he might see Emily in the evening, and enjoy the luxury of hearing the name of Sophia pronounced, professed his readiness to attend Lady Laura.

It was between three and four when she returned to Seymour-place; where she found Lady Sabina, who now breakfasted in bed, just up, and not in one of those sweetly placid moods so becoming to her beautiful features, when she produced them to an admiring world. Her Ladyship was far from being pleased to

————— “find herself
As women” (do *not*) “wish to be, who love” (their
beauty better than) “their lord.”

and unluckily, her looks were more than commonly affected by her situation. The moment Laura appeared she began, —

“What in the world could possess Belmont to offer my services as chaperon to that Miss Villars?”

Laura was well aware what pos-

sessed him ; but she prudently replied, “ O ! it was merely an offer of courtesy ! a civility due to an old country neighbour ; he knew Mrs. Valacort had declared she would not let her stir without her, and that you were quite safe from being called upon.”

“ I’ve no objection to an unmeaning piece of civility, if that’s all ; but I really do not yet think myself degraded into the office of chaperon ; tho’ Heaven knows what I may come to ! did you ever see such a figure as I look ? so wan and pale — Heigho ! it was in an evil hour, I’m sure, that I agreed to marry ! — happy Laura ! with your blooming looks ! — You have been walking ; have you seen any thing of the Duke ?”

He was going into Hyde-Park, as I crossed Piccadilly, and asked, whether we were likely to take an airing this morning ?

“ I should hate to have him see me in broad day-light this figure ; in an evening

I am better, and rouge gives a little life to my eyes."

"Yes; I said you were not likely to be out this morning—Belmont had told me you were worse than usual."

"I wish you hadn't said that; for if he thinks I'm too ill to admit him, he'll not call after his ride; and with a veil, and my large bonnet, my looks won't so easily be observed; I think the air may do me good." And she rung and ordered the barouche.—"If you are tired, Laura, or have any thing else to do, I shan't mind going alone."

"I shall certainly attend you, Sabina, because, as I have often told you, the duke, of all people, is the one I am most unwilling to have you talked of with."

"Yes, I believe you," with a sneer, that did not escape Laura; "but I shall pick up half a dozen besides him, I dare say, and I shall stop in Arlington-street at my return; I have not seen my mother these three days."

She hoped this might deter Laura from accompanying her, as the Marchioness had of late been somewhat repulsive in her manner, to this assiduous sister-in-law, which occasioned her rather to shrink from her cold looks; but she quietly answered, "Then I may set you down there, and take the carriage on to St. James's Place, where I want to call; my mother has taken ours into the city shopping, and I have no other conveyance."

Lady Sabina could not help herself, and reluctantly gave way.

The Duke soon perceived, and rode up to the carriage, and prevailed with the ladies to proceed to the gardens, where they were joined by a couple of his Grace's associates, who kindly took charge of engaging Lady Laura in conversation; and one of them being an unmarried peer, the sisters returned in better humour than they had set out.

When Mrs. Valacort alighted at home, she again inquired for Walker.

“Not come in, and, I much fear, will not soon,” said Bonaire, who was an attached Swiss servant Mr. Valacort had brought from abroad.

“What do you mean?”

“Did Madame give order for one trunk be sent to de villa at Richmond?”

“No; what should I order a trunk there for just now?”

“Ah, well! dat I was afear; it will be her own trunk.”

“What should she be gone there for?”

“I am afear she be not gone dere, but make pretext; I am afear Madame will find she not pay de bills right.”

Mrs. Valacort now became somewhat alarmed, as upon inquiry, it appeared, that the housekeeper had sent off this trunk very soon after hearing of the message from the poulterer, and had followed it almost immediately; still Mrs. Valacort flattered herself the damage would not prove considerable.

Emily earnestly begged her aunt to entrust her to look over the bills that had been huddled back into the secretaire, and engaged to sort them so as to ascertain those that were not receipted, and form some judgment of the injury sustained, before her uncle came in to dress for dinner. This was readily complied with, and it soon appeared that there was no receipt to any one of them; and as they began with the arrival of the family in town, the loss must be considerably above a thousand pounds. This was certainly not ruinous, but it was very seriously vexatious; particularly as Mr. Valacort was in this point so unfashionable, as to feel an anxiety to adapt his expenses to his means, and was an exact paymaster.

Mrs. Valacort was all amazement. "Who could have suspected such a thing, when the bills were always so regularly brought back!" she exclaimed. "Did you never look at the bills?"

her husband asked, with an air of surprise, when she made this observation to him.

“Why, you know, Lionel, I am kept in such an eternal hurry with one thing or other, that I actually never can command a moment—”

“My dear Caroline,” he interrupted, somewhat gravely, “if you would transfer to your domestic concerns a small portion of the regularity with which you manage your visiting list, it would really answer a very good purpose.”

“I protest, my dear Lionel, I am as vexed as you can be, but the possibility of such a thing never entered my thoughts; however, I am determined, for the future, to allot every fourth Sunday-morning to examining the bills returned to me, before advancing money for the next month.”

Emily could scarce help starting at the choice of *Sunday* morning for such a purpose, and expected her uncle to make

some observation upon it; but he only said "Well! experience must be bought — I hope we know the worst of it;" and having given immediate orders to Bonaire to go round among the tradespeople, and order in all their bills, he retired to dress, with a calmness that left Emily in doubt, whether his indulgent affection for his wife, or his philosophy, were most to be admired.

CHAP. XI.

THE important evening now came that was to usher Emily into this great world, of which she began to feel considerable dread, from the consciousness of her perfect ignorance respecting it. "Do we go to more than one place to-night?" she timidly inquired.

"You have no chance of getting off with one place while you stay with me," was the answer; "but I mean to do no more than I can possibly help to-night, for your sake, to inure you by degrees to the toils of ton."

"I am quite sure the toils of my garden are less fatiguing; but where are we going then?"

"Why, only to Azeoli's concert, in the

first place, and then to the Marchioness of Amersham's small party, where I shall just stop to play one rubber, that I may not be quite set down as a deserter ; and then to the Duchess of Castlehaven's assembly, where you will see all the world."

The idea of beginning with a concert somewhat comforted Emily for the further proceedings, as there, nothing need be done but sit down quietly and listen ; and she was sure of being delighted by the performers she had heard named.

She was alarmed to hear the carriage ordered to the Countess of Hindford's. " I thought we were going to Azeoli's concert?" she said.

" So we are ; it is held at the Countess of Hindford's to-night."

" O, I misunderstood you ; I imagined it had been a subscription concert."

" So it is ; but people are willing to lend their house for it, because it's very convenient to give your acquaintance a musical treat, at the easy rate of lights

and refreshments ; a concert was an expensive undertaking, when the performers were all to be paid."

" But I suppose those who could not afford that expense were not bound to give concerts."

" O yes ! concerts are quite the rage ! every body gives them in some way or other."

" But how do those who adopt this convenient mode know that they shall like to visit all the subscribers ?"

" Lord bless me, child ! how can you think of such a thing ? Who cares about the subscribers ! *they* indeed usually come off but second best ; for the lady of the house, of course, invites all her own musical acquaintance."

" But that is hard upon those who pay their money."

" Not at all ; their object is answered by getting the *entrée* to houses, of which they would not otherwise see the inside ; and having it to say, ' When I was at

the Duchess of this, or Lady t'other's, so and so.' — O ! it's all vastly well understood on both sides."

Emily did not care to utter what occurred to her upon the subject, but could not help thinking it was an odd sort of world she was getting into.

Upon their entrance at Lady Hindfort's, they found the first act just over, and every creature in motion, to make their way into the room where the refreshments were set out.

Several, in squeezing past Mrs. Valacort and her niece, nudged each other, with a half whisper of "*That's her !*" Emily looked round once or twice to see who the *her* was, but discovered nothing particular in those upon whom her eye fell, and thought no farther of it.

After being most uncomfortably shoved about, they finally reached the upper end of the room, and took their seats near the orchestra, "for the facility of getting away through the boudoir without mak-

ing a disturbance," Mrs. Valacort said ; and soon after, the music was resumed. Sit still, the company now for the most part did, that is, such a proportion of it as could find seats in the music-room ; but as to listening, it seemed to be the last object of the audience, whose *recitative* at times so completely overpowered the instruments, that Emily was out of all manner of patience.

At length, however, a favourite song, by a favourite singer, produced silence ; and just then Mrs. Valacort whispered her niece, " You'll wish to hear this, and I see somebody in the other room I want to speak to ; so I shall steal out by this boudoir door and go round ; and after the song we must proceed to our small party, you may therefore follow me by the same way, and you'll find me near the outward door ; meanwhile, I have desired Mrs. Stanmore to take my seat, that you may not remain *isolée*." And off she glided through the door that was close to them.

“ To be sure my aunt’s coming to music is an odd fancy !” thought Emily : “ it can only be to oblige me, and in this way, it is so very tantalising ! and to leave me with an utter stranger too !” She sat in dread of every pause in the song being the last, not merely from her admiration of it, which was really great, but from the bewildering sensation of not knowing what to say to her chaperon, nor how to find courage to rise and follow her aunt, through unknown ways, and strange servants.

Sir Edward Arundel, however, at this moment, to her inexpressible relief, caught her eye, and came to her rescue, engaging to pilot her safely to Mrs. Valacort. As she rose to go, she courtesied an acknowledgment of the stranger’s protection, who contented herself with a slight nod of the head in return, and there ended that distress.

Sir Edward saw them safely into their carriage, and Mrs. Valacort offered him

a place in it, if he were going to Lady Amersham's.

"I am ear-bound here," he replied; "and it would require harmony such as I have heard at the Priory, to tempt me away before it is over; but I shall see you at the Duchess of Castlehaven's."

"What a Goth, to prefer nightingales to Catalani!" cried Mrs. Valacort.

"He must be a bold man that would venture to acknowledge as much," said Emily, well aware of his allusion, but not wishing just then to enter into the explanation.

At Lady Amersham's they were going up to her quadrille-table, when a wave of the hand accompanying her nod of recognition, showed the moment to be unfavourable for an introduction. Mrs. Valacort therefore, moving on to the Marquis's whist-table, said, "I see the agony of a Vole in Lady Amersham's countenance, so we must not approach her now — Miss Villars, my lord!"

"How opportunely you are come," he replied to Mrs. Valacort as he smilingly bowed to Emily; "we were just in danger of breaking up: we thought you had deserted us."

"You forget that I told you I should have chaperon duties to fulfil, and those don't square with the card-table," she answered.

"You have a *very fair* excuse to plead, we must all allow," he returned, with a look of admiration at Emily, that made her colour up to her eyes.

A friendly sign from Lady Amersham, now showed her awful crisis past, and Emily being in consequence led up to her, met with the most flattering reception.

"Now take a chair by me," said her aunt, cutting in at whist.

She did as she was desired, and sat quietly looking over the card-table, congratulating herself that there was nothing to be said or done there that could betray ignorance.

After some time, a middle aged, plea-

'sant looking man, who had scarcely taken his eyes off her since her entrance, approached the table and said, " Mrs. Valacort, you must be so good as to present me to that pretty niece of yours ; she hangs out her grandmother's lure, and, to one of the last century like me, that is quite irresistible."

As Mrs. Valacort was about to answer, her partner bluntly interrupted her with " I'll thank you, Maxwell, not to distract my partner's attention just now ;— we are playing short — four all — a very critical moment !"

" I can talk and play," said she.

" That you do talk and play is pretty evident," he replied, somewhat gruffly ; " whether you *can* is another matter."

Emily, whose blushes had been again called up by the quaint address of Colonel Maxwell, now blushed a deeper dye, at what appeared to her, unprecedented rudeness to her aunt ; who, being in fact however a careless player, and accustomed to

much sharper rebuffs, took it very good humouredly, and with a nod to the Colonel, only said, "I shall cut out after this rubber, and then be at your service."

"Now, pray tell me," said she, as she rose from the table, "before I introduce such an odd mortal as you to Miss Villars, what you mean by her grandmother's lure."

"Why, a *blush* is a thing so entirely out of date in the present generation," he replied, "that one must be nearly coeval with her grandmother to read it aright; and if I do so, I have hopes of making discoveries as obsolete in her mind, as in her countenance."

"You will be an admirable assistant to her, reading things aright," returned Mrs. Valacort, "if you are going to the Duchess of Castlehaven's to-night."

"If I had not intended it, I certainly should now," he replied: "shall I call your carriage?"

"I think we shall be too early," said Mrs. Valacort.

“ My dear aunt ! every clock in these apartments has struck twelve.”

“ Aye, there again now !” cried the Colonel ; “ your grandmother would have deemed this a very unmannerly mode of marking the lapse of time, when the business of ancient hospitality was to make people forget it.”

“ But in my grandmother’s time,” said Emily, “ it was not, I believe, so parcelled out, and put to such numberless uses, as it seems to be here, where the clocks may rather be meant as a considerate attention to the duties of the company, which regularity alone can carry them through.”

“ That’s a fling at me, saucy girl !” said Mrs. Valacort, with a smile ; “ but come, let us take the hint then, and proceed. I rather expected Lionel to have joined us here, but I find the house is not yet up, so you shall squire us if you please.”

Getting up to the Duchess of Castle-

haven's door at *la belle heure* was a matter of such difficulty, as terrified poor Emily almost out of her senses ; and the being kept for more than half an hour, amidst the cutting, lashing, swearing horrors, to which every fine lady is satisfied to devote a considerable portion of every evening, appeared to her so very formidable, that, had not Mrs. Valacort judiciously secured the protection of the Colonel, she might possibly have been obliged to take her niece fainting home, instead of exhibiting her to an admiring world, as she expected to do.

Colonel Maxwell, partly by persuasion, partly by pleasantry, and partly by interfering to keep Mrs. Valacort's own servants quiet, succeeded in dispelling Emily's dismay ; and she soon recovered her composure, upon finding herself safe within the doors.

Now again the unaccountable "*That's her !*" met her ear, and the quick motion with which she again turned round to

try, if possible, to discover its object, was not lost upon Colonel Maxwell: "Show me such another instance of simple unaffected modesty!" said he to her aunt.

Little, indeed, could the unconscious girl imagine herself to be the object of this general curiosity; little was she aware how, for the two past days, her name had resounded through all the fashionable boudoirs, and been bandied about at the dinner-parties; for she had flattered herself with enjoying a happy obscurity in the midst of numbers; nor could she imagine that *gossiping*, the appropriate avocation of country towns and villages, was a vice of high life; and yet is it the truth, that the different sets of the fashionable world are, individually, as rapidly apprised, as minutely critical of each other's actions and motives, and as fertile in exaggeration, as the most assiduous frequenters of the chandler's shop in Squire Alworthy's parish could possibly have been.

The discomfiture of Miss Villars at the drawing-room — her *no*-presentation — her flaming feathers, extinguished by Lord Cranmore's opera-hat — her zeal for the poulterer ; and above all, her inconceivable ignorance of royal etiquette, bespeaking rusticity unequalled ; which, however, had not been so represented by the D——, who had upon that occasion been more charmed with “ the breach,” than he could have been with “ the observance” of it. All these novel occurrences were repeated in fifty different ways, together with as various descriptions of her person. She was a Juno — a Hebe — a Niobe — a Venus — a Minerva ;—any thing, in short, but what she was finally set down for, by Lady Diana Dashmont ;—“ a blushing, sheepish-looking, unfashioned, pretty-enough, country girl ; that was all, upon her honour, she could see in her ; and wondered Mrs. Valacort did not keep her up for a week, and give her the advantage of some of the

various improvers of manners to *redresser* her *gaucheries*, that she might come out with some *eclat*."

.. This decree had been promulgated at the concert, and just made its way to the Duchess of Castlehaven's before Emily appeared. It must be confessed, indeed, that expectation had been raised to the *souira umano*, and a sensation of disappointment therefore prevailed, more or less, according to the disposition of the discussor, but certainly very generally; for over-commendations will 'damn,' as surely, if not more so, than "faint praise."

.. Even the Duke, when he afterwards joined them, was compelled to lower the estimate he had made in the morning of the wonderful charms, which he had not a little contributed to blazon forth. Indeed, the extraordinary animation that overspread her glowing features, when she had rushed into his presence, combined with the incomparable sweetness that was their habitual expression, had

given a character to her beauty that did not naturally belong to it, for she was not formed to dazzle. The radiance having subsided, seemed now to sink her as much below the admiration to which she was really entitled, as she had been raised above it; she could not converse for five minutes, however, without winning her way into feelings of far higher interest, than what could be inspired by features only.

Emily, abashed and confounded, when she could no longer mistake the eyes, *lorgnettes*, and whispers, that now marked her for their object, entreated her aunt to let her get to some seat in a corner, where she might escape observation; this, with the assistance of Colonel Maxwell, was accomplished; and very soon after, Lord Cranmore and Sir Edward Arundel made their way to the snug retreat, where Mrs. Valacort would never have been satisfied to let her niece remain in quiet, had she not overheard some ill-

natured sarcasms passed upon the beauty she had so much prided herself in having to exhibit. Surprised and provoked, a cloud of displeasure had gathered on her brow, as she sat revolving, how it could happen ! not at all aware of all that she herself had done towards it, by injudiciously extolling Emily's charms, wherever she had gone for the last two days ; for, in fact, both Mr. and Mrs. Valacort had been so surprised and captivated with an exterior of such uncommon loveliness, that they could scarce talk of any thing else.

Emily's renewed pleasure on the approach of Sir Edward Arundel was as naturally expressed, as it was truly felt ; and construing this friendship, on her part, into an earnest of her sister's feelings towards him, his gratification was unbounded ; and so great was his solicitude for Agatha, and so minute his enquiries into her progress, as necessarily brought Mrs. Delmere's name into play,

and the expression it called up in his countenance was such as to lead Mrs. Valacort, who did not overhear their conversation, into the belief that Emily had captivated him. Lord Cranmore's attentions were also sufficiently obvious; and these two agreeable circumstances soon restored her brow to its wonted good-humoured expression.

In speaking of the Priory, Sir Edward adverted to Mr. Villars's gout, and the probable influence of the severe weather upon it.

"He is peculiarly susceptible of cold," said Emily, "and while we were in Devonshire, he told us his thermometer had been as low as twenty."

"My goodness! did you hear that?" whispered Miss A. to Miss B., who had just then come up arm in arm, for a stare at the 'Lion of the night:'. "She talks about thermometers! she's a blue stocking, as sure as you're alive."

Sir Edward, who was acquainted with

her, overhearing the observation, said, "And an *elegante* is bound not to know a thermometer from a barometer, is she?"

"O, I beg your pardon; knowing is one thing, but talking of what one knows is another, and always affected."

"One advantage might result from it though," said Colonel Maxwell, "the conversation would often be short as sweet."

Miss A. gave a toss with her head.

"Come," resumed Sir Edward, "I'll lay you the French bet *une discretion*, that you don't know the one from the other."

"Propose *une indiscretion*, and she'll like it better," said Colonel Maxwell.

"O you satirical wretch! who ever minds you?" cried Miss A.

"Well! leave him to his wickedness, and let's hear what a barometer is!" continued Sir Edward, bent upon avenging Emily's cause.

“ Why, Lord bless me ! it’s a long piece of wood with a glass pipe — and numbers — and a round ball at the bottom.”

“ A happy description ! and that ball contains — ”

“ Some sort of liquid that goes up and down the pipe.”

Sir Edward smiled. “ Well ; and the use ? ”

“ Dear ! why to tell good and bad weather, and heat and cold.”

“ So much for meteorological skill ! now for a thermometer ! ”

“ O, why, a little glass thing as long as my finger, in an ivory tooth-pick case, to ascertain when to put coals on the fire.”

This set all the listeners into a roar of laughter, who had not happened to meet with the Birmingham toy of that description ; which, however, so far justified the young lady’s knowledge, as that there actually was one of them lying on the

chiffoniere, in the Duchess's boudoir, which had been referred to, when, upon the sudden chill of a lost rubber, she had ordered the fire to be mended.

Miss A. insisted upon leading Sir Edward to conviction, but their progress was impeded by the Duke of ———, who was coming forward to Mrs. Valacort; when, to Emily's distress, she found herself obliged to become again conspicuous, by rising with her aunt, and forming a part of the circle that always marks the presence of royalty.

Being very particularly addressed by him on the subject of the morning's business, she felt called upon to rally her spirits and powers of conversation; and having been really much delighted with the manner in which his benevolence had shown itself, she, without the least intention of flattery, paid him two or three compliments with a grace of simplicity so new, as quite charmed him. He observed her cast a look of distress around

at the observation his notice was again drawing upon her, and condescendingly motioned to take a seat that was become vacant next to where she had been sitting ; the consequence was the dispersion of the surrounding crowd, and the relief of Emily's embarrassment.

" Do but conceive," said the undaunted Miss A., " do but conceive Miss Villars calling Mrs. Valacort her aunt in speaking of her to the Duke ! where can she have been educated ?"

" In a seminary that's quite out of date," replied Colonel Maxwell : " it is called the school of domestic affection."

" I declare you are almost as bad as a Methodist preacher," retorted the young lady ; and she confined the remainder of her observations upon Emily to the ear of her friend, where they met with a more congenial reception ; the whole being summed up by Miss B.'s remark in return, " That she must be a very experienced

coquette, to draw all these men about her so."

The Duke now rose to go, but suddenly looking back to Emily, said, "Shall you be at Lady ——'s card-party on Sunday?"

"O no, certainly not!" she exclaimed with quickness, in a tone almost of horror; but immediately recollecting the implied censure she was passing on her aunt, who might be in the habit of going there, she added more quietly, "I know nothing about cards."

"Is she a Methodist?" said a lady, who had just come in time to hear the question and answer.

"Exactly so much of one," answered Sir Edward, "as I would wish every woman to be, in whom I am at all interested."

"Dear, what an odd fancy!" was the reply, and she passed on.

The groom of the chambers now came

up to Mrs. Valacort, and said, " Her Grace had sent him to ask, whether she would cut in at whist."

Emily, alarmed at the idea of being again left, cried, " O what will become of me!"

Mrs. Valacort, smiling at her fright, replied, " Tell the Duchess that it will not be in my power to play to-night. The crowd has been so great, I have not been able to make my way to her, but whenever I can get on, I am coming to introduce Miss Villars; and now," she continued, turning to Colonel Maxwell, " 'tis no great matter whether we get to her at all; she'll be delighted to hear there's no stirring for the crowd, and think no farther about us."

A considerable influx of men followed, upon the rising of the House; amongst whom Mr. Valacort, Lord Leonard Ormsby, Lord Belmont, all made up directly to the aunt and niece.

Sir Marmaduke Ellingford, also, now

made his appearance, took his stand directly opposite to Emily, levelled his opera-glass to her face, and kept it stationary with unremitting perseverance for ten minutes ; fortunately unobserved by its object, who was earnestly engaged in conversation with Sir Edward Arundel.

Sir Marmaduke Ellingford was the finest of the fine men of the day ; the supreme umpire of taste, from whose verdict there was no appeal ; whose cravat, whiskers, paddings, were the models for all that aimed at fashionable distinction.

Such of his devoted imitators as were still remaining, now awaited with due deference to learn, what *they thought* of the new beauty.

The oracle at length broke forth. —
“ That sort of natural bloom, arising from rude health, has long been exploded — not to be endured in any thing above a milkmaid ! give me the interesting paleness of Lady Maria ! — the

eyes are not ill-cut — want information tho' ! Lady Hester would know how to make the most of them, but this poor girl thinks they have only been given her to look with — cursed insipid altogether, I take it — nothing stylish — no air of fashion about her — Ah gad ! and blushes too ! — that's quite too bad, upon my soul !”

“ The features are regular, — and a certain sweetness in her smile !” was the observation one of the bye-standers hazarded, who, now and then, ventured to have an opinion of his own.

But he was taken up very short. — “ Features ! who takes any account of features ? expression, indeed, is something ! but, as to smiles and dimples, and that sort of thing, I'm sick of them ! unless, indeed, to display such teeth as Lady Sabina's !”

“ There is a bewitching air of modesty in her demeanour !” continued the daring assertor of his own observations.

“ Modesty! — Aye — well — that may pass *pour la rareté du fait*, if, after all, it be not mere affectation! — but who is she? who brings her out?”

“ Mrs. Valacort; she is her niece!”

“ Mrs. Valacort! *ah! cela change la thèse!* — then she may soon be made something of!”

Sir Marmaduke now drew nearer, and said, “ Cranmore, I wish you’d introduce me!” with a motion of the head, directed to Emily.

“ That’s a liberty I really cannot take,” said Lord Cranmore.

“ How cursed formal!” then going round to Mrs. Valacort — “ How do?” shaking hands. “ Your niece, I’m told! pray name me to her!”

“ Sir Marmaduke Ellingford, Miss Villars!” said Mrs. Valacort.

Emily made a bow of acknowledgment with more of graceful ease than he probably expected; so, making an effort at conversation, Sir Marmaduke began: —

“ Never in town before, Ma’am, I conclude ?”

“ Never, Sir.”

After a short pause—“ Do you walk in Bond-street, Ma’am ?”

“ Sir !” somewhat surprised at the question.

“ The Lady Dangervilles never fail—from five to six—and all the world, indeed ; but it’s a cursed bore to think of something to say, so I generally cut—*et tout est dit*, you know.”

“ I should conceive it soon might be,” replied Emily, rather archly, for she was amused with a being so different from any she had yet met with.

“ Do you ride in Hessians ?” was the next question, after another little pause.

She was now utterly at a loss.

But he obligingly went on:—“ Hoby’s your only man for ’em ! and, by-the-bye, as you are new to the town, let me give you a piece of advice, never call for Cedrati-ice at Owen’s ; it is incomparably better at Grainger’s.”

“ Thank you, Sir, for putting me upon my guard !” scarce able to refrain from laughing at the air of importance that accompanied the caution ; “ but in all matters of moment I have recourse to my aunt.”

“ She might not be up to that tho’, for it is only two days since Lady Maria made the discovery by being fortunately caught in a shower in Piccadilly, which obliged her to take shelter in Grainger’s.”

“ How providential !” said Colonel Maxwell, who had been attentively watching Emily’s countenance during this dialogue.

Here the interesting conversation was stopt by Mrs. Valacort’s observing that, as the rooms were now thinned, it would be a good time to make their courtsey to the Duchess.

As they rose to go, Colonel Maxwell continued, laughingly, to Emily “ Ah, ‘ what is friendship but a name !’ that, of all the admiring host which surrounds the

‘pink of men,’ not one should have the charity to hint at the depredation that well-stuffed cravat is committing on that well-rouged cheek !”

“ You can’t be serious, in thinking it paint ?”

“ Nay, I call the cravat to witness ; look at the delicate tint tinging its edge from being so unguardedly raised the tenth of an inch too high.”

No sooner did Mrs. Valacort and Emily quit their seat, than Sir Marmaduke took possession of it, exclaiming with a half yawn, “ Cursed thin, to-night ! what’s become of all the world, I wonder ? bring me some ice, Sir !” and then extending one leg upon the ottomane, and drawing the cushions so as to favour a gracefully recumbent posture, (from whence it will evidently strike the reader, that this was prior to the era of tight lacing, which somewhat impedes an elegant lounge,) he took to eating his ice in perfect style,

nodding approbation of it, as he proceeded to glass after glass, accompanied with the proper interjections of *gout exquis ! bien pommadée !* &c.

There being still sufficient crowd about the door-way to delay their progress, Colonel Maxwell directed Emily's attention to the proceedings of Sir Marmaduke,—
“ And now, do let me hear your opinion of that semblance of a man !” he said.

“ Singularly diverting !” she replied.

“ Would to Heaven he were singular !” returned the Colonel ; “ but, alas ! he is, as you may perceive, but the head — ‘ if *head* that may be called, which *head* hath none,’ of a tribe that infest these our fashionable circles ! a delectable compound of egotism, apathy, and impertinence !”

“ Would not insignificance be a sufficient characteristic ? I think you are rather severe !”

“ I confess it moves my spleen, when I see those libels on the male creation :—

things 'without a name'* courted—made up to, by the fair and fashionable, their impertinence tolerated, their fiat sought!—O! that women could be sensible of the mischief they have to answer for, by such encouragement!"

"Do you pay our sex the compliment to think it would rest with us to counteract—"

"Depend upon it," he interrupted, "men and women mutually spoil, or improve each other; if all the worthies of your sex treated *him* as you have done, the effects would soon appear."

"As *I* have done, Colonel Maxwell! what can you mean?"

"I mean, that your mind is as transparent as your complexion, and that it will be in vain you may ever expect to disguise your feelings, Miss Villars. Your

* They have since obtained one, of which the fame has spread, if Lady Morgan may be credited. See in her "*France*" the surprise of the Parisian ladies at the *Dandy*.

keen sense of the ridiculous was manifest through the playfulness of your answers, and if others would designedly evince as much, it might do good, for I could almost suspect his having been struck with it, by his not following you."

"Indeed, I hope you are mistaken: it would be intolerable presumption in me to aim at reforming, who know so little of the world I have just got into, that I go wrong at every step; but you are such an observer that I must be upon my guard with you, I perceive."

"No, for Heaven's sake, throw off all guard! and show yourself exactly as you are, and you may do more by your example, than volumes of precept could accomplish."

They now made their way towards the boudoir, followed by a host of men so conspicuous, and some of them in such high request with the husband-hunting spinsters, that ample amends were made for the mortifications of the evening, by

appearing before the Duchess with this brilliant *cortége*.

Neither mortification nor brilliancy had, however, made any impression upon Emily; she conceived it to be the natural and distressing fate of a stranger to be stared at; and her attendant beaux, she supposed, wished to pay their compliments to the lady of the house: the sensation uppermost in her thoughts was that of thankfulness, for the approaching end of the business of the night, as well as for being so surrounded, that Lord Belmont would not have an opportunity of addressing any thing particular to her.

The Duchess gave a look of much approbation, as Mrs. Valacort introduced her niece, and immediately said, — “Don’t run away, Mrs. Valacort! I have ordered up some supper for these famished men that are just come in, and I depend upon you.”

A petit souper was of irresistible at-

traction, and, to Emily's regret, the proposal was instantly acceded to.

It was very shortly after announced ; and to her, who was unacquainted with the happy device of the letting-down supper-trays, it appeared to have risen as by enchantment out of the ground, when she found an elegantly covered table, in the very apartment she had but just before passed through.

A party of about a dozen sat down ; Lord Cranmore had secured his place on one side of Emily, and she looked towards Colonel Maxwell, in the hope that he would take the other, when Belmont slipped before him, saying, " I beg pardon, Maxwell, but I am charged with a long message from my sister for Miss Villars !" and seated himself between her and the Colonel.

Emily, though somewhat disconcerted, assumed an air of cold dignity, and said, —
" It will be unnecessary for Your Lordship

to take the trouble of repeating it, as I mean to appoint a meeting with Lady Laura, as early to-morrow morning as she may be inclined to admit me."

Awed by a manner so different from any thing he had ever seen in her, he remained silent, with an air of mortified submission, but retained his seat, casting a resentful glance upon Lord Cranmore at the same time, towards whom she had directly turned.

It was rather remarkable that, however embarrassed Emily might at times feel, at an unexpected allusion to Lord Belmont, his presence never failed to restore her self-possession ; possibly, the levity of his manner impressed her with the instantaneous conviction, that he was no longer the Charles of her imagination, which, in his absence might, imperceptibly to herself, still continue to adorn him with some of the ideal virtues, in which she had once so fondly believed.

"Apropos!" cried one of the com-

pany, as an accidental pause afforded the opportunity, "Have you heard of the elopement, Duchess?"

"No; who?"

"Mrs. Fairlawn, with Lord Dorman."

"What upon earth could tempt them to elope? I thought it was all an understood thing between the husband and wife, on the principal of mutual forbearance."

Emily laid down her knife and fork, in amazement.

"Why, so it was believed, but she seems bent upon marrying Dorman; and so, slight damages will be laid, and a divorce sued for."

Emily's eyes turned upon her aunt, expecting to see the expression reflected in them, of the feelings so marked in her own; but Mrs. Valacort took it very much in the light of an every-day occurrence, and only, said — "Mighty silly! to forfeit her place in society so causelessly! as Lady Dorman, she can't be

visited. She's an agreeable woman, had a very pleasant house, and as long as her husband was satisfied, nobody would have drawn back."

"Her husband did not seem inclined to make any stir about the matter."

"No; he began first, and retaliation is always fair."

"What an enviable fellow is Fairlawn, to recover his freedom!" exclaimed Lord Belmont.

"You should have reserved that observation till next year, Belmont," said Colonel Maxwell: "it is too bad in such early days to scoff at chains!"

"Galling chains! God knows!" was the reply.

"Shame on you, Belmont!" continued the Colonel: "married to the finest woman in England, and utter such an expression! take care some 'damned good-natured friend' don't report—"

"Ah, Maxwell, you are a happy bachelor! you cannot enter into the feel-

ings of a wretched dog, who has been tricked out of an angel, to be linked to an idiot! You know not how I have been fooled!"

But Colonel Maxwell knew more than Belmont was aware of; he was a distant relation of Lady Saltland's, and though not privy to all the Earl's manœuvres, he knew that a prior attachment had caused the alliance with Lady Sabina to be, for a while, doubtful; he had even tried his influence to soften Lord Saltland in favour of his son's predeliction, and this had awakened a great interest in him, for the object of that predeliction.

Lord Belmont had spoken in a kind of half whisper, which, though apparently only addressed to his neighbour, it was impossible Emily should not overhear; and her indignation, at being thus made to hear what was so very improper, betrayed itself in the variations of her countenance: she would have given the world

Lord Cranmore would speak to her, but he was not fluent in public.

“ One only consolation there would be for me on earth,” continued Lord Belmont, “ and that is the friendship of the exalted woman I have lost, which might eventually also have a happy influence upon Lady Sabina, and reconcile me to my fate, but from this I am rigorously excluded.”

“ For God’s sake, have done with conversation so ill-timed !” interrupted the Colonel: “ if you really wish to confide grievances to a friend, command me at any time : my best advice shall be yours ;—but—”

“ Advice to blow out my brains ! I know no other that can be of any avail, and, upon my soul, I have been more than once tempted to it.”

Lord Cranmore, who had watched the changes in Emily’s countenance, without guessing their origin, now said, anxiously, “ I fear you are not well, Miss Villars !

hours so different from those of the Priory, do not suit your lately-recovered health : will you allow me to convey a message from you to Mrs. Valacort ?”

“ It cannot now be long before she moves to go, and I am told, I must inure myself to these doings,” she replied ; “ but talk to me of the Priory, and I shall forget the lassitude, which, I must confess, I begin to feel.”

“ What observations would the adventure of Mrs. Fairlawn have called forth there do you think ?”

“ The very simple one, I believe, that, even setting every other consideration aside, no provocation from a husband can excuse a woman’s forgetting what she owes to herself.”

“ True, Ma’am, as you justly observe,” said a gentleman, catching her words, in part, from the opposite side of the table : “ a slighted woman takes a lover, in consideration of what she owes herself.”

“ I fancy that was not exactly Miss

Villars's observation," said Mrs. Valacort, wishing to draw Emily out.

Emily, a good deal confounded, both with having been overheard and misrepresented, was still never wanting to herself in the cause of morals; and she replied, "You would indeed have reason to blush for me, Ma'am, if it were, but I had no intention of obtruding my unworldly notions, when they would be so misplaced."

"No, no! that would be 'Caviar to the multitude' indeed!" cried Colonel Maxwell, laughing. Emily, who had spoken from her feelings, without exactly weighing the construction her words might bear, was quite abashed at having them thus mischievously pointed as a sarcasm on the company.

Sir Marmaduke Ellingford having by this time finished his half-dozen glasses of ice, and seen the apartments nearly empty, now lounged into that, occupied by the supper-party, a slight inclination

of the head marking his polite notice of the lady of the house — “ Exquisite Maraschino ice, upon my soul, Duchess !” he said, “ who do you employ ?”

“ My *chef de cuisine* officiates in the capacity of *confiturier* as well,” she replied.

“ Cherish him then as the apple of your eye : he is *inappreciable* !”

“ Have you supped, Sir Marmaduke ?— Here’s room.”

“ No, ’tis not my hour yet : I’m off to White’s.”

He now moved a few steps towards the door ; but stopping to take a survey of himself as he passed the looking-glass, he recollected the news of the day :— “ Oh ! have you heard of the elopement ?” he said.

Being answered in the affirmative, and no second idea occurring to him, he quietly lounged out as he had lounged in.

Mrs. Valacort, perceiving her niece’s tired looks, rose to go, but the Duchess

exclaimed,—“ I lay an embargo on you three for a couple of rubbers more ; Mrs. Valacort ! Lord Belmont ! Lord Leonard ! you won't desert me !”

“ I am not given to desert, you know, but this child really has been ill,” said Mrs. Valacort.

“ And can't you trust to Mr. Valacort's care of her, and let your carriage come back?—We'll have mercy upon him after the fatigues of the House !”

This arrangement was assented to ; and as Emily was going, Lord Belmont said, “ I hope, Miss Villars, Mrs. Valacort repeated Lady Sabina's message respecting her horse, as she is now prohibited from riding.”

“ I ought to beg Lady Sabina's pardon, my Lord, for neglecting to request you would convey my acknowledgment for the obliging offer, but I am too great a coward to attempt an exhibition in Hyde Park.”

“ My sister would, I am sure, attend

you in any more private airing : she is quite lost for want of a companion on horseback."

" I shall easily satisfy Lady Laura, that I should be more of a drawback than an addition to her pleasure ; I have unfortunately increased in timidity."

" Come, Belmont ! come !" cried the Duchess ; " we are waiting for you !—Apropos ! Miss Villars, do you waltz ?"

" Me, Ma'am ! no, indeed ! I hope Your Grace don't suspect it !" exclaimed Emily, with the most eager *naïveté*.

The Duchess laughed, and Lord Cranmore cast a glance of such delight upon Emily as, happening to meet her eye, impressed her with the consciousness of a charm in his countenance she had not before remarked.

" I was only going to propose a little *dejeuné*, and practice here, with my nieces, on Tuesday morning," said the Duchess : " they have not, I believe, completed their set ; but I see you are not

yet quite up to us town ladies. She is, however, a pretty elegant creature for all that," continued the Duchess, turning to Mrs. Valacort, "and you will soon rub off her country rust."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Colonel Maxwell, "though the injury should not be quite as fatal as to Scriblerus's shield; depend upon it, any change must be for the worse!"

He was about to offer her his arm as he spoke, but perceiving Lord Cranmore's motion for the same purpose, he drew back, saying, "Ah, well! go together for a pair of unfashionables as you are! Would to Heaven!" he added, in a whisper to Mrs. Valacort, "he had the charge of her through life, but there's an awkward impediment in the way."

"What?"

"Don't you know?"

"No."

"Another time, then:—will you give me my soup to-morrow?"

“ And every other day that you are inclined to take it.”

“ Have a care ! the difficulty may be to get rid of me, now you have this attraction.”

“ Out upon you, for that unmannerly *now* ! it would be a true touch of the *woman* to retract the invitation.”

“ But I rely upon another feminine attribute for averting your wrath.”

“ This is not your first trial of it, if you mean my good nature.”

“ I see I may safely leave the interpretation in your own hands ; you will not make it very severe,—so good night ! *a demain.*”

CHAP. XII.

WHEN Emily saw Mrs. Valacort the next morning, "I hope," she said, "the Duchess did not keep you longer than she talked of!"

"No, I took care of that: her nephew came from the club, and I made him take my place: I was at home before four: I dare say they went on long after day-light, but I always keep regular hours, as I told you."

"Regular hours!" thought Emily. "Ah! how judicious in Miss J—— to endeavour at restoring 'things to their right names;' and how I do wish my poor aunt could find time to let me read the book to her!"

“ By the way,” continued Mrs. Valacort, “ you are a sly little gypsey, after all, Emily, with your demure looks! here are you coquetting with no less than three of the first marrying men in the kingdom, — to say nothing of that Lord Belmont, whose manner to you I don’t above half like? —”

The term sly was so very odious to Emily, and the accusation of coquetry so new, that she answered, with the utmost gravity, “ My dear aunt, I am looking with impatience for one hour’s respite from your unceasing occupations to explain some circumstances that will, I trust, convince you I do not deserve the epithet sly, and that I hold coquetry in abhorrence.”

“ Well, only don’t make such an important matter of it, and to-morrow we will discuss it all at leisure.”

Mrs. Valacort had set so much apart for Sunday-morning business, that Emily concluded she rose earlier than usual on

account of church, so she asked, "Is your church near at hand?"

"Church! O aye, true, you'll want to go to church; let's see! there's South Audley Chapel just by! the Belmonts have a pew there: you might ask Lady Laura for leave to go into it: I dare say they scarce ever fill it themselves."

"Why mayn't I go where you do?"

"The thing is that I am apt to be late, and so I go to St. James's Chapel, where that is of no great consequence, because I have the *entrées* of the Peeress's closet, being an honourable, you know, (she was daughter to a Viscount,) but till you qualify, by giving your hand to Lord Cranmore, you can't enjoy that privilege."

Emily was hurt at the carelessness with which her aunt treated a subject of such moment; and turning to her uncle, with a very serious air, she said, "I suppose there must be churches where a seat may be obtained by paying the pew-opener:

perhaps my uncle would be so good as to take me to one of those."

Mrs. Valacort, who really had once a right sense of her duties, and was now in fact more led away, from never giving herself time for reflection, than from actual dereliction of principle, felt rather confused, and said, "I assure you, Emily, when I am in the country I go to church very regularly."

"O! that you were there all the year round!" exclaimed Emily, from the bottom of her heart.

"Was there ever such an unconscionable wish!" she cried, and desirous to change the conversation, she asked Mr. Valacort, whether he meant to go to the opera.

"It has occurred to me that this dear girl would enjoy seeing the whole of it," he replied, "and that is more than you are up to!"

"Lud ha' mercy! I should die of it!" was the answer.

“ Then, my proposal is, that Emily and I should make luncheon our dinner, and take in overture and all : I shall enjoy it myself ; for well as I love music, I have never heard that, nor even the whole of the first act yet.”

“ Pray settle it so, then, and much good may it do you !—I wish I liked music !”

“ But as you do not,” said Emily, “ I wonder you subscribe to so many concerts ! for I think I have heard of one every night, beside the Tuesday and Saturday’s opera.”

“ When you have been with me a little longer, you will find out that all is done for fashion in London, and scarce any thing for pleasure : you can hardly conceive how one is harassed with the duties of society, and the penance one has to endure in conformity with the taste of the times.—What do you smile at ?” addressing Henry, who was just come in time to hear this speech.

“ To think how unlucky it is the days of convents should have passed away in this country:—with such a disposition for voluntary penance, what an edifying nun you would have made!”

“ I declare, Henry, you are worthy to be a pupil of Maxwell’s, who, by the bye, has invited himself to dinner here to-day Lionel! and I rather shrink from a *tête-à-tête* with him: he takes the liberty of lecturing me now and then, which I don’t so well relish: I wish you’d come and protect me, Henry!”

“ No, no; we must have Henry with us to the opera,” said Mr. Valacort.

“ Well; Maxwell is so eccentric that one need not much mind him, that’s one good thing!”

“ Is he?” said Emily, “ he struck me as uncommonly agreeable!”

“ *Cela va sans dire*,—you struck him, you know: those strokes are always mutual; but what is Bonaire bringing upon that great waiter? Oh, poor Emily!

all the ‘at home’s’ to you, in consequence of the tickets sent round! Now you’ll form a more competent notion of all that’s to be done and to be avoided; and here are twenty notes about my private box at Covent-Garden, — that’s another eternal torment there’s no doing without. Come, Bonaire, do rid us of these breakfast-things, and let’s set to work. Lord!” she exclaimed, as she was looking over the various cards to answer, “here’s another provoking blunder of that blockhead I have just turned away! — I have been avoiding this woman like the plague, and here’s her ticket! he must have sent mine to her, or she could never have ventured upon it.”

“Is she a woman of bad character?” inquired Emily, pleased, after what had passed the last night, to find her aunt making distinctions.

“I know nothing about her character,” was the reply: “that’s her own concern; she may be a very good sort of

woman, for any thing I can tell, but she's abominably *mauvais ton*, — be-diamonded from head to foot upon all occasions; so vulgar! I should be shocked to death to have her seen at one of my parties, — and lives in Bedford Square into the bargain!"

Mrs. Valacort was too busy sorting and writing, while stating all these insuperable objections, to observe the sorrowful surprise in Emily's countenance, at finding her aunt so very fine a lady.

Among the notes, was a proposal from Laura to take Emily to Kensington-Gardens, which Mrs. Valancort would not suffer her to decline, aware of the influence of air and exercise upon her looks. She very reluctantly gave way; but knew not how to state her fear of Lord Belmont's being of the party before her uncle and brother. Mrs. Valacort had no time for the gardens herself, but concluded Lady Saltland would be the *chaperon*.

When the barouche came to the door, however, Laura alone was in it. She had imagined that Mrs. Valacort, with whom she wished for opportunities to curry favour, would join them, when she saw no other *chaperon*; and had got rid of her mother by asserting that it was so settled. Being disappointed in this, she however quieted all scruples about propriety, by saying, that Lady Sabina had promised to follow, if they would wait for her in an alcove of one of the retired walks.

This impressed Emily with the dread of Lord Belmont's attending his lady; and she eagerly addressed an inquiry to her uncle, "Whether he never turned his horse's head that way?"

"Not often," he said; "but he was willing to do so, if she wished it."

As they were driving off, Lord Cranmore rode up, and, finding where they were going, asked leave to attend them?

which was readily granted, Henry accompanying the ladies in the barouche.

The plan of waiting for Lady Sabina was soon relinquished. Emily, ignorant of the etiquette of *chaperonage*, thought her uncle and brother sufficient protection, and Laura was very careless about the matter.

As they approached the parapet wall which opens the gardens to Hyde Park, they found themselves in a crowd, whose attention seemed fixed to something passing near the Serpentine River. — Inquiring what had happened? —

“Some forlorn damsel making a gentle attempt at *felo-de-se* to excite compassion, I conceive!” answered a dashing man who, with his glass at his eye, was coolly contemplating the scene.

“Gracious Heaven!” exclaimed Emily, turning deadly pale; — Lord Cranmore and Henry rushed out of the gardens, and were at the spot in an instant.

“ For goodness’ sake !” cried Laura, “ don’t let us make a scene here ! she means herself no irreparable mischief, I dare say, or she would have taken her time better.”

With a look of indignation at Laura, for this unfeeling speech, Mr. Valacort led Emily away to the bench opposite the door ; who, though ready to sink, was straining her eyes after her brother and Lord Cranmore, wholly unconscious of having attracted those of all the surrounding men.

Lord Cranmore soon returned, eagerly exclaiming, —“ She is not dead !— But I have, perhaps, taken an unwarrantable liberty with your carriage, Lady Laura, in having her put into it, to be conveyed to a medical acquaintance of mine, not a hundred yards from the Park gate.”

Emily’s approbation of his zeal and feeling was strongly expressed in her countenance.

“ It will not be very comfortable for us to get into afterwards, I fancy,” was Laura’s observation, “ though we shall have the resource of Sabina’s ; only, I dare say, it’s all a trick, and one hates to be the dupe of that sort of thing.”

Lord Cranmore cast a contemptuous glance upon her, and told Emily, “ All the account he could obtain was, that the unhappy girl had shown evident symptoms of derangement before jumping in, and had been quickly taken out, but insensible, and continued so : no one seemed to know any thing of her, and nothing was found about her by which she could be recognised ; she seemed young and pretty. Villars has taken charge of depositing her at my friend’s, who is an eminent surgeon and a very worthy man ; if she be recoverable he will spare no pains.”

When Henry returned, he reported that the surgeon was fortunately at home, and showed the most compassionate at-

tention to her, and all proper means were resorted to; but, when he came away, she remained insensible, and the surgeon begged to see Lord Cranmore when he left the gardens.

“ He might be very sure I intended it,” was the answer.

Lady Sabina at length appeared; and a gentleman, who had ridden by the side of her carriage, having alighted to offer her his arm, Emily concluded it could only be Lord Belmont, and immediately said to her uncle, “ Now, that we can leave Lady Laura under the protection of her sister, we must advert to the hour, my dear Sir: I can very well walk back to Stanhope Street”.

“ It is, indeed, time,” replied Mr. Valacort; “ and possibly there may be no objection to your having the use of the disqualified carriage, as Lady Sabina’s is here; *you* will have no fears, Emily, of the traces the poor creature may have left.”

“ They were guarded against in the first instance,” said Lord Cranmore; “ she was wrapped up in the coachman’s great coat.”

The arrangement was acceded to, and Lady Sabina entered the gardens leaning on the arm—not of her husband, but of the Duke of Ulswater.

Her Ladyship was coldly civil in her notice of Emily; till, upon Lord Cranmore’s saying something in her ear, she seemed to recollect herself, and, in a more obliging manner, apologised on the score of her miserable morning sufferings, for not having called in Stanhope Street.

Emily, far better pleased to receive the apology than the visit, replied, with her usual sweetness; adding an acknowledgement for the obliging offer of the horse; which produced an indication of surprise that did not escape her notice, and satisfied her that the offer had been made without Lady Sabina’s sanction; a

slight inclination of the head was the only answer.

Lord Cranmore having put Emily into the barouche, left her to go and see after the poor rescued girl; and Henry then informed her of some farther particulars. "When Lord Cranmore first interfered, there was one young man remarkably assiduous about the apparently lifeless object, which naturally led to our inquiring whether he were any ways connected with her: No; she don't seem to be known to any body, was the answer; but no doubt that young spark looks for his reward if she can be recovered, for she's very young and pretty. Upon a nearer approach Lord Cranmore recognised him for a determined profligate, and he observed to me, 'the poor creature may be recovered to a worse fate! We can secure her against that at least!' Advancing, therefore, with an air of authority, he said, 'I know something of this unfortunate girl; be so good as to make way, that I may see

proper care taken of her ;' and beckoning Lord Saltland's servants to him, who had joined the crowd, he sent one of them for the coachman's box-coat, with orders for the barouche to draw up to the rail ; and then seeing her carefully wrapped in it, he directed the men to take her to the carriage, leaving the charge with me of conducting her safely to the surgeon's, whilst he returned himself to satisfy your anxiety, that life had not fled."

Emily expressed her approbation of Lord Cranmore's proceedings, with a warmth that delighted her uncle, although unconscious herself of all that it betrayed. Her esteem was indeed increased by every opportunity that offered of comparing him with other young men.

She enjoyed a most comfortable interval of quiet, during her aunt's *morning* visits ; at whose return towards seven, Mr. Valacort was summoned to attend his niece to the opera. I have stopped the carriage to

take you," said Mrs. Valacort, "that you may have overture and all : I am determined to give you a surfeit at once ; but Emily, you are not half sufficiently dressed : we shall proceed straight from the opera to Lady Watson's supper."

Emily looked surprised. " I thought, my dear aunt, it was near one, when my uncle came back on Tuesday."

" Well ! what then ?"

" That would be Sunday morning, you know."

" Pho, nonsense ! it won't prevent your going to church : Chalmers tells me you are always up by nine, whatever time you go to bed ; so go and ornament yourself a little more."

" Forgive me, my dearest aunt, if I for once resist your commands : my going to Lady Watson's supper can neither be of importance to her, nor to any one else ; and indeed it is very important to me not to do what I think wrong, even if I thought it erroneously."

Emily so eminently possessed the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo*, that Mrs. Valacort gave way; and said, "The carriage shall bring you home, then, when you have set us down : to be sure nobody should do what they *think* wrong ; that makes all the difference. I wouldn't do that myself, but I am convinced there is nothing wrong in it."

" I hope you have duly weighed *both* sides of the question, and then conviction may be a sure guide," replied Emily rather seriously.

" Well, well ! don't you be righteous over-much, Emily ! for I give you my word the world won't bear with that at all."

Emily thought the world acted very much in character in endeavouring to put righteousness out of the question ; but having carried her point, she judiciously let the argument rest for the present ; and having received very strict injunctions *not to sit forward in the box*, till her aunt

should join them, “as that was deemed improper until it had the sanction of the *chaperon* ;” she promised obedience ; and set off with her uncle, not a little struck with the things that *are* considered of importance in this great world, and those that *are not*.

CHAP. XIII.

COLONEL MAXWELL came according to his appointment, and rejoiced to find it a *tête-à-tête* dinner: "For I am anxious to have some serious conversation with you, respecting your pretty niece," he said.

"You would be a good deal surprised," said Mrs. Valacort, still a little provoked with Emily's resistance, "to discover what a fund of self-willed obstinacy lurks under that air of persuadable sweetness, that leads one to expect she would give way to every body."

"I exactly read in her countenance," returned Colonel Maxwell, "that species of genuine sweetness of disposition, that will give up her own pleasure to any

one; but her sense of right to no one: very different from that indiscriminate good nature we are apt to extol in the world, as easily persuaded into a bad action, as out of a good one."

"I see she has very completely fascinated you, be she what she may."

"She has, upon my soul! and that makes me anxious to talk to you."

The call to dinner here interrupted him. When the servants were withdrawn, he resumed the subject by observing,

"Lord Cranmore appears to be very seriously captivated by Miss Villars."

"I hope he is; and a very well assorted match it will be. Lionel and I were talking it over last night: she'll make a very pretty peeress; and they may set about reforming the *beau monde* together, for they are both so desperately good, and moral, and religious, and all that sort of thing."

"I wish from the bottom of my soul, *he* was all that sort of thing," with a

half smile "that *she* is ; but there's a sad spoke in the wheel, that her nice sense of right and wrong will hardly get over."

"What do you mean?"

"Have you never heard of Mrs. Sidney?"

"Lord! who cares about a Mrs. Sidney, when marriage is in question? she'll be provided for like other Mrs. Sidneys; and better, for the Kingsboro's are as rich as Jews, you know."

"But this is not a Mrs. Sidney in the common run. If money could have satisfied her, Cranmore, I'm told, has made her the noblest offers; but she is passionately attached to him, and a woman of such respectable conduct—"

"Respectable conduct!" interrupting him; "bless my heart, Maxwell! how can you talk such nonsense of a kept woman?"

"I really believe I am doing her no more than justice, except in the one instance of her weakness to him; and

there are some interesting and extenuating circumstances belonging to *that*, I am told, but of those I am not quite master. What I know to be fact, however, is, that she is treated not only with affection but respect, both by Lord Leonard and an old general officer related to the Marchioness, who has expressed himself strongly upon the subject in presence of a friend of mine."

" Ridiculous stuff!"

" She leads a life of absolute seclusion, and is a most attentive mother to two lovely children, a boy and a girl."

" Good Heavens! could any body bear the idea of his disgracing himself by such a marriage? marking the prior misconduct of his wife, moreover, by the distinction between untitled and titled children! I give you my word, Maxwell, that indulgent as one is obliged to be in the world, I hold the present barefaced introduction of illegitimate children to be far more pernicious in its

effect upon good morals; than even matrimonial infidelity, where appearances are saved."

" I won't dispute which may be the worst of two things so very bad ; only I admire your newly awakened zeal upon the subject," smiling : " I conclude you have intimated it to General Falkland, that he may make over his pretty daughter in future to some greater latitudinarian in morals."

" Now I could kill you for that saucy speech ; for you know very well how often one is obliged, in conformity with the world, to act contrary to one's own view of things ; and she's an elegant inoffensive girl, and the General is a distant relation, and very rich —"

" Say no more ! say no more ! that last argument is of such acknowledged weight, what child of this world could set it at nought ! But seriously, whether any body may go so far as to wish Cranmore to marry this woman, I cannot say :

what I have heard asserted is, that his marrying any other will break her heart; and just so much I wished you to know, before you suffer that lovely girl's affections to be irretrievably engaged; for it is evident that he is over head and ears in love with her."

" Well then, seriously, I shall take it extremely ill of you, if you give the remotest hint to Emily of what you have now been telling me; for she is such a romantic little enthusiast, that there is no knowing what effect it might have upon her."

" You may rely upon my not taking the liberty of going one step beyond what I have done in a matter of such extreme delicacy; but I could not feel satisfied that you should be unacquainted with what might be productive of much misery, if discovered too late."

" To tell you the truth, I am quite a fatalist with respect to marriage. I think all interference useless: what is to

be, will be; and you will be quite a convert to my doctrine, when I inform you how unaccountably Lionel and I were brought together."

"Well, try your hand," he replied; a good deal provoked with her impenetrability to what he deemed of such moment, but fully aware he should do no good by pursuing the subject.

As her faith in fatalism; as well as her zeal for good morals, both seemed to originate in the eager wish for the union she had in view; and that it is most likely the reader's opinions will not be shaken by her '*argumens en Pair*,' it may be more interesting to suppress the remainder of this conversation, and inquire with Lord Cranmore after the poor rescued girl.

The report of the surgeon was so far favourable, that the vital powers were rapidly resuming their functions; but no symptoms of sensibility yet appeared to any thing about her; she groaned

heavily ; had opened her eyes without seeming to see, and that was all.

Lord Cranmore determined to wait till some appearance of returning consciousness should give a chance of obtaining what might guide his further proceedings respecting her.

At the end of about an hour, the surgeon informed him, that she seemed to be muttering indistinctly to herself, but took no notice of any questions put to her. He then went up with the surgeon ; on their opening the door she turned her head to look at them, but immediately turned back to the posture she had been in.

The surgeon inquired how she found herself ? to which she made no reply.

Lord Cranmore had a remarkably agreeable toned voice, and with an expression of much kindness, repeated the question ; she seemed struck with the sound.

“ Vastly well,” said she, with a very

quick motion of her head to look at him. After a little pause, " You see I did quite right," she added.

" In what ?"

" In jumping into the water, to extinguish the flames."

" What flames ?"

" Dear ! what a question ! why the flames my clothes caught from my mother's bed, to be sure."

A compassionate glance was exchanged between Lord Cranmore and the surgeon : hoping, however, that by continuing to make her talk, something might be discovered, he resumed,

" Had you ran far before you reached the water ?"

" Farther than I shall tell you, mayhap."

" Won't your mother be uneasy at your absence ?"

" Very likely ; but there's no help for that, you know."

" If you will tell me where to find

your mother, I will let her know you are safe and well."

"Will you? so do, then; it will be very good-natured of you."

He stopped for some time, hoping she would say more; but she had again turned from him.

"Where shall I send to your mother?"

"O dear! it would be a very good joke to tell you that: thank you for nothing!"

"Why, where would be the harm of it?"

"I should be found out directly, you know."

"And would your mother be unkind if she found you out?"

"How can you think of such a thing? She never was unkind to any body in her life."

"Why are you unwilling she should find you out then?"

"Dear! how dull you are! it's *him* that I'm afraid of, if I must speak out."

“ And would your mother tell *him* ? ”

“ How do I know ? He made just as great a fool of her, as he did of me : he'd wheedle the heart out of any one : but I've nicked him now, you see ; so it's all very well that he betrayed his purpose.”

“ If you will direct me to your mother, rely upon it he shall not know where you are.”

“ I wonder what business it is of yours, after all : you are one of the smooth-tongued ones, I see : — like him for that : but I shan't be taken in again, I promise you.”

“ It is my earnest wish to serve you, if you will tell me your mother's name.”

“ A pretty story, indeed ! that I should tell you what she has taken such pains all her life to conceal, poor soul ! No, no ! not quite so weak as that neither ; so you may as well go about your business, for not another word shall you get from me, I can tell you ; ” and turning her-

self entirely away from him, she again began muttering indistinctly, and paid no further attention to any thing he could say.

“ We shall obtain nothing more for the present, I perceive,” said the surgeon ; “ this is possibly only temporary alienation : care and quiet may produce something better to-morrow.”

Lord Cranmore mentioned his solicitude to rescue her from the profligate young man, who was busying himself so much about her.

“ Your Lordship may rest assured she shall remain in safety here, till we can learn something more of her,” said the worthy man. “ Young, pretty, and innocent as she appears, she must soon be enquired after in some way or other, that may guide our further proceedings. My wife and daughter will be at home in the course of the day, and will pay her every attention ; I can answer for them.”

They then agreed upon the advertise-

ment to be inserted in the newspapers, respecting her.

Lord Cranmore enjoined him to spare no expence in getting whatever might be necessary for her, as well as placing a careful person about her; and then prepared himself to go and make his report to Emily at the opera in the evening.

She asked whether he thought that a female might inspire confidence to make her more explicit? as she seemed to apprehend some snare; adding, "I should very much like to try my influence."

"I have every reason to think *that* irresistible," he replied; "but we must endeavour to be sure of the poor girl's real situation, before it could be proper to let you approach her: we have a good old housekeeper who may possibly succeed better with her than I have done. I will get her to go to her to-morrow, if the surgeon has continued to fail in obtaining any thing more."

Lord Cranmore's delicate attention to propriety, upon every occasion, made its due impression upon Emily.

Mrs. Valacort arrived at the half of the second act, attended by Colonel Maxwell. "Have I at last succeeded in being in time for the duett?" said she, as she entered the box.

"It is just over," Mr. Valacort answered.

"Well, then, I give it up; for never, by any chance, can I expect to be earlier than to-night."

"Do you much care, dear aunt?" Emily asked, with something of an arch smile.

"Certainly, because every body talks of it, and one likes to have something to say."

"If that's all, I should think a suggestion from Valacort might answer your purpose," said the Colonel.

"Why, perhaps it might do as well, if not better," she answered, laughing;

“ you know I don’t pretend to love music, or be a connoisseur ; I’m sure I needn’t ask how Emily has been pleased ; I see it in her countenance.”

Never indeed had Emily passed an evening of such uninterrupted, exquisite enjoyment : passionately fond of music ; to hear the perfection of composition performed in a style so perfect ; to have her uncle join in all her raptures, and the intervals filled up by interesting, agreeable conversation—produced altogether a calm delight, that beamed in her eyes, and was reflected in those of Lord Cranmore to a degree perfectly satisfactory to Mrs. Valacort.

“ I advise you not to let orangeade or ice approach the lips of that pretty creature, during her stay amongst us,” said Colonel Maxwell to Mrs. Valacort, in a half whisper, not meant to be unheard.

“ Why ? there would be no living in such heat and crowds without them !”

“ Because she will assuredly be poisoned, in revenge for being such a living satire upon the times; offering so striking a contrast, by the attractive elegance of her modest costume, (Emily’s style of dress was equally chaste and well-fancied,) to all the picturesque *Torso’s* so unreservedly exhibited by misses and matrons, stripping ‘ *a qui mieux mieux*’ for the public benefit, dear liberal souls! Pray Heaven they may but know where to stop!” with a very arch glance at Mrs. Valacort, who, though somewhat short of fashionable exposure, was considerably scantier of covering than her niece.

“ A truce to your sarcasms! *Monsieur le mauvais plaisant!*”

“ Nay, the *mauvaise plaisanterie* is in your wicked imagination: I only venture to hint a tender alarm at the increase of this classical taste for the suppression of drapery; and wish to put Miss Villars upon her guard against what may be expected from the mamma’s who shall

find her monopolising the admiration, for which they are letting their daughters forego what was once the acknowledged characteristic of Englishwomen."

"Upon my life, you are become a most intolerable cynic, Maxwell! I shall quite hate you, if you encourage this girl in all her prudish singularities," Mrs. Valacort answered in a slight tone of pique; for Emily had actually stood a little contest with her upon the subject.

"Indeed I should deserve the fate Colonel Maxwell deprecates," she said, smiling, "if I had the presumption to affect singularity: I merely wish to escape notice, by adhering to what I have been used to think right."

"If it amounted to *marked* singularity, I should not so much admire it; tho' faith! in the cause of modesty, it might claim exemption from censure, too! but the fact is," appealing to the men in the box as he spoke, "that her appearance is eminently

fashionable, as well as elegant ; is it not exactly what every father and brother must wish, for those in whom they are interested ?”

Lord Cranmore's eyes sparkled delighted assent, but he did not trust himself to speak. Mr. Valacort nodded and smiled : he remained silent, however, from unwillingness to wound his wife.

“ What a triumph it will be to Marianne when she sees Miss Villars !” Colonel Maxwell continued.

“ Pho ! *she* is a rank blue stocking, and singularity is their element,” Mrs. Valacort replied.

“ You would ascribe her unmodish deviations to a better cause,” he returned, “ had you witnessed the shock she received in our trip to Paris, during the peace of Amiens ; from seeing a female at the *Institut*, in so statue-like a costume, as caused us to turn away our eyes, in as much disgust as I discovered just now in those of Miss Villars, at the first ap-

pearance of the undressed dancers; but this *par parenthese* ; the shock I alluded to, arose from the observation we overheard a Frenchman near us make to his companion : *‘C’est effectivement, un peu fort, mais que voulez vous ? c’est le ‘ nud Anglois :’ nous nous copions mutuellement tout en nous detestant.’*”

“ Pshaw ! I don’t believe one word of it !” cried Mrs. Valacort : “ it would be too bad to have the reproach of delicacy retorted upon us from thence !”

“ It’s fact, upon my honour ! * but having named Marianne, puts me in mind to request, that you will allow me to gratify that best and most amiable of human beings, Lady Sarah Maxwell, by introducing Miss Villars to her acquaintance.”

“ I protest I don’t know that I shall,” replied Mrs. Valacort : “ why she’s ab-

* A fact, indeed, to which the author had the mortification of being eye and ear-witness.

solutely ' nine times dipped,' and the Phoenix of the sisterhood into the bargain ; and this strange girl has this very day been asserting, that she knew more happy old maids, than wives ; and instanced a foolish relation of hers, for one ; who tries the patience of all about her fifty times a day."

" Not one of us ever saw *her* out of humour, tho', or heard her utter a censorious remark," interrupted Emily.

" But you'll acknowledge that she's a perfect fool, my dear !"

" In that case, matrimony would not have inspired her with wisdom," said Colonel Maxwell : " I am quite on your side of the question, Miss Villars, the decided champion of the sisterhood ; and will not even allow my excellent aunt to be the *rara avis* : I can produce a phalanx of them, from her own society."

Emily gave him a look of such delighted approbation, that he exclaimed, " Such another look as that, would be

enough to constitute me ‘*Avvocato del diavolo*,’ if his Holiness proffered it to me : not,” added he, laughing, “ that I meant to insinuate, my spinsters lay on *that* road ; for I do seriously contend for their pre-eminence in various ways over the same number of wives taken at a hazard : do but consider how much good temper must be retained from the avoidance of matrimonial squabbles, and squalling brats : in short, Miss Villars, if I may introduce you to Lady Sarah’s *coterie*, I will show you a dozen at least of the most cheerful, sensible, happy looking beings you can desire to see.”

“ And you can seriously be satisfied,” said Mrs. Valacort, “ to let her train your niece to the same forlorn prospect of single blessedness ?”

“ Upon my soul, when I look round upon the men and women of our gay circles, I shrink—”

“ Hush ! hush !” cried Mrs. Valacort, “ you inveterate compound of prejudice

and formality ! You incorrigible *old bachelor* ! in short I won't let you say another word ;" and turning abruptly to Lord Cranmore ; " do you go to Lady Watson's supper ?" she asked.

" I — I hav'n't determined," was his hesitating reply.

Mrs. Valacort had been so struck upon coming into the box, with her niece's good looks ; that she could not resist making one more attempt to persuade her to go ; and had begun with him, in the hope of getting an auxiliary.

" Now, Emily," she proceeded ; " here's the opera over ; it has but just struck eleven ; the ballet you care little about ; five minutes stopping at home would add all that is needful, of ornament to your dress ; we might still be at Lady Watson's before twelve ; and I will only take one turn through the rooms with you, and not stay supper myself : you can make no possible objection to this !"

" The very great one, my dear aunt,

of interfering with your pleasure; beside my reliance on your promise, of letting me off, when I pleaded this cause before leaving home : but how comes the opera to end so much sooner to-night, than it did on Tuesday ?”

“ O ! because of the absurd and provoking interference of the Bishops, you know,” appealing to Colonel Maxwell.

“ Aye, weak men ! fancying that by sending the fine world away from the opera-house, before Sunday morning, they could find no better resource than going home !” he replied.

“ My dear aunt, grant me in this case the benefit of clergy !” said Emily, playfully.

“ You are a most impracticable girl ! and yet there’s no knowing how to be angry with you !” though Mrs. Valacort felt half inclined to be so ; but the evident approbation in the countenances of the men, checked the expression of it ; and she gave up the point.

“ My Lord, I bespeak you for my beau ; and I’ll carry you,” turning to Lord Cranmore.

But His Lordship just then recollected it would be out of his power to attend her. As he put Emily into the carriage, he inquired where he might make his report to her, respecting the poor girl, next day ?

“ O ! at home, I earnestly hope ; but it would be safer to ask my aunt.”

“ Till four, in Stanhope-street,” said Mrs. Valacort, “ and then in Hyde Park ; and then you know you are engaged to dine with us ; and in the evening you may attend us to the Sunday concert ; and afterwards to Lady ——’s, if you feel inclined.”

“ Not as *there* !” thought Emily ; “ but it will be time enough to debate that point to-morrow.”

CHAP. XIV.

AT Emily's return from church, she found her aunt busily employed in routing through her secretaire to collect her bills. "Now you shall see," she cried, "how regular I propose being in future, in my household concerns; to guard against a repetition of this odious business of Walker's: you shall assist me in looking over these; and every fourth Sunday, I will make a point of settling with the housekeeper, and seeing that the bills are duly receipted. Well! why don't you commend me? I assure you I want encouragement to the task, for there's nothing I hate half so much as attending to money matters!"

"So that you inflict the penance upon yourself on a Sunday, in atonement for

not going to church?" said Emily, with a look half serious, half playful.

"Lord, child! you harp so much upon going to church: I hope you are not a slave to mere forms!"

"I hope not, dear aunt: I should conceive the form of going to church to be of very little use, if the heart did not prompt it."

"I'm sure it is easy to read a more edifying sermon at home, than is to be heard in most churches."

"Very possibly; but then the various occupations set apart for a Sunday morning in London, may so frequently engross the time appropriated for the edification—to say nothing of the benefit of example."

"Indeed, Emily, I begin to fear, that with all your serio-playful treatment of this subject, you are in danger of becoming a Methodist, if you are not one already."

"I have proved myself so ignorant of the value of terms here, that I am al-

most afraid to assert what I am. Pray are all those reckoned Methodists, who make any difference between Sunday and a week-day, in London?"

"No, no! there ought to be a difference, assuredly; and I would have you to know I am far from being unmindful of it; and whenever I can get away without giving offence, I make a point of being at home earlier on a Saturday night than on any other, that my servants may go to church, if they choose it; and I pay for a pew for them, that they may have no excuse: so I attend properly to *their* religious duties, you see, whatever I may do to my own."

Emily was too much grieved with her aunt's inconsistency, and levity, on so important a subject, to pursue it; unless she could have hoped to lead her into more serious views, than could be expected with her head full of this pecuniary misfortune, for she was going on rummaging.

" Pray, are Lord Cranmore, and Sir Edward Arundel, reckoned Methodists, dear aunt?" she however asked.

" Not that ever I heard of: why?"

" Because they really behaved at chapel this morning as if they meant something more than mere form, by going there."

" Come, let's get through this troublesome job; and if there's time afterwards, you shall see that I am not quite so bad as you seem to suspect; for you shall read me one of those new sermons you were praising."

Emily's hopes awakened by this little concession: she would fain have begun by securing the time for the sermon; but did not urge it when objected to; judging that her aunt, like a child, might possibly be led by gentle degrees into doing what she would set her strength to evade, if too seriously enforced: the hold which the world had taken upon an understanding not naturally deficient, was so power-

ful, as to leave no opportunity for reflection to come in aid of better thoughts. The clear-headedness of the assistant, made much quicker work of the business than might have been expected; and the loss sustained by the ‘trifling oversight,’ as Mrs. Valacort called it, of not casting her eye upon the bills when returned to her, to ascertain their being receipted; amounted, in the course of the three months, to considerably more than a thousand pounds. Her husband’s forbearance increased the delinquent’s sense of her carelessness; and she was sufficiently vexed to form very pious resolutions of greater accuracy in future; which her niece still hoped to improve into obtaining the substitution of an hour in a week-day, instead of church-time on Sunday, for carrying into effect.

The sermon was then read,—and, moreover, attended to and liked; for Emily read remarkably well. Then came the whole train of notes to be answered, about that ‘tormenting private

box,' which Mrs. Valacort scarce ever thought of occupying herself, but which was an appendage of *ton*, not to be relinquished: it was, however, refused to all applications this week, that Emily might have her choice of what she would see.

"And now for the drudgery of writing some hundred 'At home to masks.' I shall see masks on Thursday," said Mrs. Valacort.

"Is there any chance of our getting through all this Sunday-morning business in time for me to engage your private ear for an hour, my dear aunt? I am very desirous of imparting some things that you ought to know, both respecting Sophia and myself."

"O, certainly; and I am all impatience to hear them:—that shall be during our airing in the Park: here, you know, we are never secure from visitors; and I couldn't bear to have the conversation interrupted."

There were means of security that might have been resorted to, Emily thought;

but she soon found it was the morning of habitual call of some distinguished visitors, who were not to be denied ; and she saw her aunt's mind was completely engrossed with settling who was and who was not to be invited to see masks ; so that it could not be expected, family-occurrences should take place of business that seemed of such importance : she therefore quietly submitted to await the airing.

Lord Cranmore called at his return from Knightsbridge, where the old house-keeper had, by his directions, gone at an earlier hour. Poor Patty (so they afterwards found her name to be) had seemed pleased at the sight of her, and asked, " If she were sister to Mrs. Hickson ? she was dressed so like her."

" Barnes, hoping to obtain some information by humouring the idea," Lord Cranmore said, " acknowledged herself a relation ; and added, I hope Mrs. Hickson is your friend ?"

" Yes ; but if it hadn't been for my lady I should have got no great good by that."

“ And won’t my lady be anxious to know what is become of you ?” Barnes asked.

“ Perhaps she may,” she replied, thoughtfully.

Barnes then offered to write and inform her ladyship of her present abode ; to which she seemed assenting : but, when the pen and ink were brought, she suddenly exclaimed, “ O, no, no !—you know, well enough, my lady can keep nothing from Hickson, and Hickson can keep nothing from George, and so I should be obliged to run away again ; silly, silly girl, to be so taken in—I see your drift, fast enough !” and she burst into a flood of tears, and would give no farther answer ; and in this state I found them,” he continued, “ Barnes endeavouring to soothe, but the poor girl quite incoherent ; till, upon my dismissing the old woman, she, with great eagerness, demanded a solemn oath, that she would not inform Mrs. Hickson

where she was. Upon this being complied with, she became quieter, but would take no notice of me whatever."

All that fell from the unhappy girl seemed not only to denote her virtuous, but anxious to continue so; and Emily again urged her wish to try her powers of persuasion with her, to which he now felt inclined to give way; they were settling the mode of proceeding, when Mrs. Valacort interfered, and strongly objected to exposing her niece to an encounter with a mad woman; if, indeed, it were not, after all, a mere take-in; for she found it so impossible, she said, in this great town to distinguish real objects from impostors, that she made it a rule, never to trust herself in the way of imposition, but confined her benefactions to the public charities, that must, doubtless, be well regulated.

Lord Cranmore did not dispute the prudence of the proceeding, nor make any observation upon the possibility of

mismanagement, in charitable institutions; but simply stated, that nothing had yet made it clear this was a case for charity, except of opinion, and for that he somewhat warmly contended; and was seconded by Emily, who was not easily deterred from an act of humanity, but stood firm against all her aunt's arguments, even when she brought forward *en dernier ressort*, the royal ticket of admission to the rehearsal of the Ancient Music, which she had obtained for the next morning.

Lord Cranmore pledged himself for the safety of his charitable associate; answered for the attention of the surgeon and his family, who should be stationed within call; and, at last, so far conquered opposition, as that the carriage was allowed to be ordered at twelve the following day to carry Emily upon this alarming expedition.

A succession of visitors now filled up till the hour of resort to the

Park, where the confidential communication was to take place in the midst of the whole fashionable world; but here again a disappointment awaited Emily, who was not a little surprised to find that what had been called *an airing*, terminated in a *stand still* along the railing in the Park that reaches from Hyde-Park-corner to Grosvenor-gate; closed in, by all the equipages and four-in-hands in town, and attracting all the gentlemen on horseback to take their station by the side of the carriages for the benefit of conversation. Of course, every man of Mrs. Valacort's acquaintance came up in turn; and it would have been far more impracticable to pursue any interesting conversation here, than with the interruptions to be expected in Stanhope-street. An air of vexation stole over Emily's features in spite of her endeavour to suppress it; which Mrs. Valacort perceiving, said, "I really did not intend getting into this, for it is often

attended with danger, and I am rather a coward ; but our being so late made it impossible to get on, or we should simply have driven round the ring, seen this curious spectacle at a distance, and conversed uninterruptedly, and at our ease."

Colonel Maxwell now came up to the side of the carriage.

" You might as well come into the barouche to us, Maxwell," said Mrs. Valacort, " and see us safe out of this *bagarre*, which, to say the truth, I did not quite mean to bring Emily into."

The Colonel very readily obeyed.

" Surely," said Emily, " I must be mistaken in what I fancy I see ! for it appears to me as if the coachman of that stage-coach, which seems to be set fast among the carriages, was kissing his hand and nodding to you, dear aunt."

" You are only mistaken in what you conceive him and his carriage to be," said Mrs. Valacort, laughing ; " it is like : would he could have

overheard you ! he would have taken it as the highest compliment that could be paid him."

" Is it possible ?"

" Look a little farther," said Colonel Maxwell, " to that open barouche-landau, and you'll see something better again ; you see a female on the box next the driver ; that's Sir Timothy and Lady Dashfoot ; and the inside of the vehicle is occupied by the coachman and two livery-servants."

Emily's hands and eyes were raised in wonder.

" And, what's more still—so emulous are the whips of this high-minded generation of rivalling their coachmen in every way, that they do not omit the accompaniment of a quid of tobacco ; and one, has so far outstript his compeers, as to have had a front tooth extracted that he might dispose of the result of his chaw in the most unquestionable style."

“ Are you not practising upon my credulity ? ”

“ I wish, with all my soul, I was ; for, I vow to Heaven, the follies of the age make me almost ashamed of belonging to it : and yet you have not heard all ; for there is a select four-in-hand club established, where none but *professional* language is spoken ; and any man expressing himself like a gentleman would be expelled, as derogating from the spirit of the noble institution.”

Emily literally remained silent from astonishment.

The danger Mrs. Valacort had anticipated was speedily verified ; her carriage got so locked in with others, as to be raised from the ground in the attempt to disengage it ; and her terrors and screams (which speedily brought flocks of men to their assistance) now as much surprised her niece, as her calmness among the evening cuttings and lashings had done before ; not yet aware how much the

consciousness of exciting interest, increases the fears of fine ladies.

Being finally extricated with safety, and returned to Stanhope-street soon after six, the confidential hour was at length secured before the business of the toilet required their attention ; and Emily related all the family anecdotes she thought it necessary to impart ; amongst which she made lighter of her own conduct, with respect to Charles Belmont, than any other biographer would have done : indeed, he was now so lowered in her opinion, that she did not estimate the sacrifice at the height it deserved when she made it ; neither did she represent in its strongest light the levity of his so speedy transfer of affection to Lady Sabina ; but she most earnestly entreated for Mrs. Valacort's concurrence in checking the impropriety of his present conduct, which she stated forcibly as she felt it ; and it roused very just indignation in her aunt, accompanied with the

promise of taking every method of keeping him at a distance.

Of Lord Leonard Ormsby's attachment to Mrs. Delmere, and her decided rejection, she also spoke ; but there Mrs. Valacort's ideas differed widely, indeed : she could think it little short of madness in Sophia to reject such a lover, and upon so absurd a plea ! however, she recommended it to Emily to urge her sister's taking a house in town the next winter, as the most likely means of putting an end to such unaccountable vagaries.

She was bent upon finding some other grounds for Sir Edward Arundel's attentions, than mere concern for Agatha ; but he had thus far been so much upon his guard, that whatever Emily's wishes might be, she did not flatter herself with his having more than a very respectful friendship for her sister.

“ Well ; and now have you told me all ? ” Mrs. Valacort continued.

"I believe so," said Emily.

"What! does poor Lord Cranmore go for nothing?"

"I have nothing to tell about him."

"Do you mean that he never occupies your thoughts more than any other given person?"

"O no; I don't mean to say so: for he occupies them more than almost any body I am acquainted with."

"Come, you are an honest, open-hearted girl, after all! notwithstanding your formality and prudery. So then, he need not be very apprehensive of a repulse when he comes to open his mind?"

"He gives me no reason to think there is any thing to open his mind about; the distinction he pays me is very flattering, because I think it indicates esteem; and his mind seems to me so much above the common level, that I quite dwell upon it with admiration; but, I hope, these sentiments are admissible on both

sides without implying any thing one need hesitate to acknowledge."

"Well; we shall see how that may be," Mrs. Valacort replied, with an incredulous smile, but cautious not to say any thing too pointed just yet.

"But you accused me of prudery, dear aunt, — what do you mean?"

"Why don't you see that it's the general custom for women to shake hands with every man that comes up to them? but you draw back as if you had never been in good company before."

"Indeed, I shook hands with Sir Edward Arundel."

"And is he the only privileged man in the world? You held back from Sir Tristram Traverse, at the Duchess's."

"And is it not allowed here to distinguish a friend, from a coxcomb? If I were to become so very fashionable all at once, what would they say at my return home? Have patience with me till Sophia and I become town ladies together, next

winter, and then you shall see how we will polish each other!" and she put an end to the discourse by observing how near it was to dinner-time; so they adjourned to their respective toilets.

A dinner of twelve covers was an unavoidable Sunday occurrence, Mrs. Valacort told her niece, when they again returned to the drawing-room, "as Saturdays and Sundays were the only free days for members of parliament."

In the evening, Emily pleaded hard to be excused from the concert; but this was inadmissible; liberty having been obtained to introduce her as a special favour: for the concert was limited to subscribers. "It was quite a ridiculous scruple," Mrs. Valacort said, half angrily, "when majesty itself countenanced Sunday evening music; she hoped Emily did not think it necessary to exceed them in piety!"

Emily would not have been at a loss for her reply; but she was not willing to

displease her aunt for trifles and forbore arguing the point. She only stipulated, therefore, to be set down *at home* after the concert: no fear of displeasure would have driven her to a *card* party; and to this, though somewhat reluctantly, Mrs. Valacort at length agreed.

CHAP. XV.

THE following morning punctually at twelve, Emily set out for Knightsbridge, and found Lord Cranmore at the surgeon's door, waiting to hand her out of the carriage.

Favourable symptoms had continued to increase; the nurse reported that after having cried unceasingly for some hours, Patty had fallen asleep; and when she awoke, appeared to be conversing with some one she conceived to be at her bed-side; but in such a way as could not easily be understood, only she seemed as if listening to receive answers: since which she had been extremely composed, had arisen and dressed herself, but declined leaving her bed-room. She had ex-

“ Why not ? to a friend ! ”

“ Why, because of my poor mother, you know.”

“ Would she be angry ? ”

“ O dear, no ; there’s no anger in Heaven ; she’s there now : that’s what she and the angel came on purpose to tell me ; and that I needn’t mind having burnt her in her bed,” (poor Emily shuddered,) “ because it had purified her from the sins that used to weigh her down so sadly.”

“ I can see no reason why you should not answer my question ; I only want to find out how to serve you.”

“ Why, that’s very good of you ! and you look as if you meant me kindly. But, dear, there’s no trusting to looks, you know : only think how George used to look ! ” and she laid down her work and crossed her arms with an air of deep melancholy.

“ And was he not kind ? ”

“ Why, how can you ask such a ques-

tion? Could any thing be worse than to set about ensnaring me in that cruel way! but I was too deep for him, though poor mother would never have found him out, you see." She now became very thoughtful, and it was long before she would again attend to any thing. At length she said, " I've been thinking that I had better write, and give him some good advice."

" You can't do better," replied Emily, bringing her the writing materials.

" O dear! but that would betray where I am; and, as soon as ever he finds that out, I must be off again."

" But you are with friends that will take care to let nobody come near you whom you do not wish to see."

" Am I? O, then, that's all very well." She now again took up her work, and remained silent.

Emily put the ink-stand towards her; but she took no notice. At length, giving up the hope of obtaining any thing

farther by her stay, she rose to leave her.

“Patty looked up with extreme quickness, exclaiming, “O! you are not going to leave me, are you? I thought you were my good angel.”

“I will stay, if you will tell me what I can do for you; but if you are afraid to trust me, I may as well go.”

“O! no indeed! I will trust you with every thing in the world.” She held her hands before her eyes for some minutes, as if trying to collect her ideas; then, bursting into a passion of tears, she exclaimed, “O dear! what shall I do? I’m afraid my poor head isn’t right, for I can’t remember any thing in the world!” And she continued to weep as if her heart would break.

The door of the room had been left ajar for the surgeon to be within hearing; he now made a sign to Emily to come away; “I will see you again to-morrow,” she said, as she was going, “and, by

that time, you will have recollected what you wish me to know."

"But will you, indeed, come back to-morrow?"

"I will, indeed."

"Tell me your name then."

"Emily Villars."

"Emily Villars, Emily Villars," — she went on repeating to herself, in the midst of her sobs and tears, as long as they were within hearing.

The surgeon considered her as in a more promising state than he had yet done. Her consciousness of the alienation, was a favourable symptom, and subsequent quietness might confirm it; he had therefore beckoned Miss Villars away, he said, lest any unintentional allusion in the conversation might have again touched upon the fatal spring of her malady.

Emily asked whether she might not return the following day? and was told it must depend upon circumstances, which Lord Cranmore undertook to ascertain at

an early hour in the morning ; and his report was to determine the farther proceedings.

The report of the following morning was satisfactory. She had been rational at intervals during the remainder of the day ; passed a quiet night, and awoke with a perfect recollection of Emily's promise, and extreme impatience for its fulfilment. She had made no inquiries where she was, nor would give any other answer to the questions put to her, but that ' she should tell Emily Villars.' She still refused to quit her room.

When Emily again appeared, she seemed struck with awe on beholding her ; as if she were then first aware of the difference in their conditions. She arose, laid by her work, fixed her eyes steadily upon her as she curtsied, but remained silent.

" You see, I have kept my word," Emily began ; " do you not recollect Emily Villars ?"

“O dear, Ma’am!—but you are a lady; what right have I to trouble you with my distresses?” and she wept.

“I told you truly that you should find me your friend; never mind, therefore, whether I be a lady or not; tell me how I can serve you, and you shall find I will.”

“Why, Ma’am, if you will please to give me work—and not let any body know where I am.”

“You may rely upon being supplied with work, and your abode shall not be betrayed to any one you wish it to be kept from.”

Emily stopped, hoping she would name whom she dreaded; but Patty remained silent, and seemed lost in thought; after a considerable pause, she at length said, “I can’t imagine how I came here!”

“You were brought here by a friend, who is as ready to serve you as I am.”

Again she sunk into a deep reverie of some continuance, and then, with a be-

wildered air, she fell a-crying, and said, "O Ma'am! I'm afraid, I have done something very wrong!"

"What makes you think so?"

"Because, when I saw my poor mother burnt, just after I had found out George's treachery, I know I thought I must go distracted; but I don't know what I did afterwards, nor how I could get here."

"Well! never mind how you got here, since you have been taken good care of; we'll talk of that some other time: tell me, now, whether there wasn't a lady in your neighbourhood that was very good to you, and that will wonder what's become of you?"

"O yes, Ma'am! Lady Sarah was always very good to me indeed; but then it would not be safe to tell her where I am, because of Mrs. Hickson."

"Did Mrs. Hickson bear you any ill-will?"

"No; but she's so foolishly fond of

George Fentham" — she stopped, and coloured up to her eyes.

"He is her relation, is he?"

"Her nephew, Ma'am; but little could she have suspected——" again she stopped in extreme confusion.

Fearful that the agitation might produce wildness, Emily wished to lead her thoughts back to Lady Sarah, and asked, whether she was not an uncommonly good woman?

"O dear, Ma'am, to be sure! Lady Sarah Maxwell's goodness spreads far and wide; nobody ever heard of her, I believe, but might see cause to bless the day."

Most agreeably did the name strike on Emily's ear: "Where is her house in London?" she inquired.

"In Wimpole-street, Ma'am. But, dear lady!" imploringly, "don't let her know if I have done any thing very wrong;—for, indeed, I must have been

out of my mind, after all the trouble she took to teach me what was right ; but, in truth, I did not set fire to my mother's bed on purpose, only, when I found out George to be so bad, I didn't know what I did ; so, perhaps, I might, and it don't all signify now, you know, since she has told me how happy she is in heaven."

Poor Patty again relapsed into incoherency ; Emily, however, was satisfied she had obtained enough to enable her to be of essential service ; and determined to go straight to Wimpole-street to impart what had happened, and learn what was to be done ; and she left the surgeon's, unperceived by the unhappy girl.

Emily ordered the carriage to Lady Sarah Maxwell's ; and, upon sending up her message, was immediately admitted.

It appeared, that the cottage inhabited by Patty and her mother had been burnt down ; but there was no reason to suppose any lives had been lost ; although

neither mother nor daughter had since been heard of, they had both been seen during the fire. Lady Sarah described Patty as an interesting innocent girl, very affectionately devoted to a poor broken-hearted mother, who had met with some cruel usage in early life, which she had never got over ; her name was Benson : no symptoms of insanity had ever been manifested in Patty ; of George Fentham's attachment to her, Lady Sarah knew nothing ; he was her housekeeper's nephew, and she believed rather a profligate young man ; she would make particular inquiry respecting him ; for Patty had always been a great favourite with her ; and she had been much concerned at her disappearance, and wondered how the advertisement in the newspaper came to have escaped her notice. Upon examination it proved that, by some inadvertency, it had not been inserted in her paper. She proposed sending Mrs. Hickson to the poor girl directly ; but to this

Emily stated the objection ; and requested a delay, till her mind should be more composed.

Miss Maxwell came into the room, Lady Sarah named Miss Villars to her, "Niece to Mrs. Valacort, I am quite sure!" said Miss Maxwell ; " your confinement to your bed, Ma'am, has prevented you from hearing my uncle mention the pleasure he had in view for us, in making this acquaintance ; for there is no mistaking his description of Miss Villars."

Emily's cheek mantled with pleasure, at having been favourably spoken of, by the Colonel, of whom she thought highly : there was a prepossessing openness of countenance in Miss Maxwell too, and a frankness of manner, that instantly won her confidence ; and she felt she had got among kindred minds.

All that related to Patty was now fully and duly canvassed ; and Emily, extremely delighted, to find the interest she had felt so justified : gave way to her kind

feelings in their fullest extent; and returned to Stanhope-street with her head full of plans, which, however, must await the perfect restoration of their object, before any of them could be even proposed.

She found Lord Cranmore with Mrs. Valacort anxious for the result of her inquiry; but her aunt was exceedingly discomposed at her having gone alone, to a person with whom she was unacquainted. Emily had conceived that the errand upon which she went, would have been a sufficient plea for intruding anywhere. Mrs. Valacort dwelt upon the strange appearance it must have to Lady Sarah Maxwell, that she should not have gone to introduce her niece.

“ It could only impress her with compassion for my ignorance of the ways of this great world: she looked to me like benevolence personified! as if she couldn't put an unfavourable construction on the actions of any human being.

I think, I never saw two more charming people in my life than Lady Sarah and Miss Maxwell !”

“ Aye, exactly what I anticipated ! Now shall I have you drawn headlong into blue-stockings !”

“ Indeed, if these be specimens, I shall not be very desirous to keep clear of the prognostic !”

“ No !—specimens ! no such thing ; these are actually decoy-ducks ! be assured the generality of them are made up of pedantry and affectation.”

Emily now made her report of Patty, which highly gratified Lord Cranmore ; but Mrs. Valacort had scarce patience to hear it to an end ; so provoked was she, at all the precious time this business had taken up ; the necessary consequence of which must be the curtailing one half of the things that ought to have been done ; or it would be impossible to get to Covent Garden by the middle of the

second act, which was the interesting moment.

“ I wonder at the practicability of ever getting there at all,” Emily observed, “ according to the general arrangement of hours !”

“ Nothing so easy,” Mrs. Valacort replied: “ it is but ordering dinner an hour later than usual, not staying the farce, and delaying the toilet for the evening engagements till after coffee.”

Lord Cranmore was appointed to meet them in the box. Lord Belmont had called, Mrs. Valacort afterwards told her niece, “ making a pretence of wanting some parliamentary information from Lionel, to fish out the routine of our evening engagements ; but I foiled him.”

There was one sentence which she had overheard him utter at the Duchess of Castlehaven's, which had occasionally recurred to the thoughts of Emily : “ Her friendship,” he had said, “ might have

had a salutary influence upon Lady Sabina, and, by that means, have reconciled him to his fate." Were it, indeed, possible this could be his object, it might deserve consideration.

She stated her doubt to her aunt ; who, upon this occasion, was better qualified than the guileless Emily to form a just opinion ; and found very little difficulty in satisfying her, it was merely thrown out as a snare, and intended to be heard by *her*, though addressed to Colonel Maxwell.

CHAP. XVI.

THE business of the evening was managed without interruption or difficulty; and Emily's looks and spirits being fully restored, she appeared so very lovely, that her aunt set forth to her assemblies in delightful expectation of the effect she would produce; nor was her expectation now balked. The general disappointment in Emily's appearance at the Duchess of Castlehaven's had since caused her to be as much cried down as she had before been cried up; but on this night she found her true level; and obtained all the admiration she was justly entitled to excite. The open expression of it, however, was so new to her as to prove very distressing; and

greatly did she rejoice when she finally made her escape from it.

On the following morning she returned to Knightsbridge; and a sense of disappointment stole over her mind upon alighting at the surgeon's, from the absence of Lord Cranmore, who had, hitherto, always been awaiting her arrival there; it soon gave way to very different feelings, however, when the surgeon's wife, a plain, well-meaning, worthy woman, came forward to inform her of His Lordship's goodness. He had put a fifty-pound note into her hand for Patty's use; adding, at the same time, that now she had protection so much more suitable than that of a single man, he should content himself with hearing occasionally from Mrs. Dunbar how she went on.

The delicate attention to propriety which every new occasion brought to light, gained upon Emily's esteem faster than she was herself at all aware of.

“ His delicacy equals his humanity,” she replied.

“ O dear, Ma’am, if you knew all the instances Mr. Dunbar could give you of that, you would think as we do, that his equal is not to be met with far or near.”

Poor Patty seemed more collected than she had yet been, but her spirits were proportionally sunk : she deplored the death of her mother, whom she believed to have been burnt, but could give no distinct account of how the fire had occurred, “ because of the state of distraction,” she said, “ into which George’s ill-usage—or rather her discovery of his bad designs, had thrown her.”

There was no venturing as yet to undeceive her respecting her mother, whose fate, at any rate, was also uncertain ; and the surgeon had repeated his caution to avoid as much as possible agitating subjects ; so Emily only endeavoured to soothe, by turning her mind to religious consolations ; and assuring her she had

fallen into the hands of excellent people, who would show their good-will in every way she could wish : she expressed her gratitude, accompanied with strong ejaculations that she might be saved from ever seeing or hearing of George Fentham more !

She entered into no details of his misconduct, however, nor was it desirable to let her pursue the subject. Before leaving her, Emily ventured to name Miss Maxwell. “ Miss Maxwell was all goodness ; but she would tell Mrs. Hickson—” and she now became somewhat incoherent, which made it seem advisable that Miss Maxwell’s visit should yet be deferred.

Part of the business allotted for this morning was, the visiting the exhibition of water-colour drawings, in Brook-street; and here Lord Cranmore was found. Emily spoke her sense of his conduct respecting Patty, with a warmth that first conveyed to his heart the delightful

conviction of having awakened her interest for him. A glow of animation overspread his countenance as his intelligent eyes rivetted themselves upon her face, with an expression of such extreme tenderness, that hers were fain to seek the ground: blushing to an almost painful degree, she endeavoured to divert his attention, by calling it to a beautiful landscape before which they happened to be standing. Lord Cranmore's name upon it showed him to be the purchaser: she made the observation. "There are finer performances in the collection," he said; "but this had an irresistible attraction for me; can you guess it?"

Emily recognised a resemblance in the fore-ground to one of her Devonshire sketches, and, recovering a little self-possession, she answered, "It is very flattering to my sketch, that you thought it worth remembering."

"The difficulty would be ever to forget——"

The approach of others, checked the conversation; but a sort of understanding was taking place between them that did not require the assistance of words.

Mrs. Valacort, very well satisfied with the appearance of things, had loitered away as much time as she could contrive to bestow upon what she cared so little about; when it luckily occurred to her, that a stroll in Kensington Gardens might be well-timed; nor was she inclined to make the smallest objection to Lord Cranmore's proposal of going in at the Bayswater gate, and confining themselves to the more rural and unfrequented walks.

As they were alighting, Colonel Maxwell came up, having, at Lady Sarah's desire, taken his ride round by Knightsbridge to inquire after Patty Benson. Mrs. Valacort invited him to join them, took possession of his arm, and kept him in full conversation during their walk.

The nightingale was pouring forth his richest melody: spring smiled in her freshest loveliness: all nature seemed to harmonise with the exquisite sensations hope had now called up in the breast of Lord Cranmore. Many an apt allusion, and many an impassioned vow, found its way through the (not very reluctant) ear of Emily, to a heart every way formed to appreciate the sterling worth that here assailed it. Nor let that heart be censured, for over-readiness in admitting tender impressions: be it recollected, how the kind affections in which it abounded, had been thrown back upon it, by the unworthiness of the object that had first obtained them; and how naturally they must revert to one, who, in every thought and action, offered a contrast so immediate, and so striking. Scarcely had a day passed since her acquaintance with Lord Cranmore, which had not afforded some occasion of raising him in her esteem; independently of that witchery, which so

often stands in lieu of all other merit ; the perfect devotion of true love, that shone forth in his every look and motion.

If these considerations prove insufficient to acquit Emily, to those rigorists in Cupid's code, who deem it profanation to admit more than one genuine passion in the same breast, I know not what farther to say in her behalf ; for that she was as truly attached to Charles Belmont when she so magnanimously relinquished him, as she is now in danger of being, to her new lover, is a positive fact ; though it may be pleaded, in mitigation of censure, that at this period, her feelings were by no means as clear to herself, as to her biographer.

The morning ended as usual in a course of visits. As they were driving away from one of them where they had been let in ; Emily observed, " What admirable command of countenance you have, dear aunt ! I'm sure, I must have betrayed my surprise."

“ At what ?”

“ At that curious transaction about the Opera tickets.”

“ I didn’t take notice of it.”

“ Did you not see some, lying on the table ?”

“ Yes. What then ?”

“ Did you not hear the lady who came in, express her wish for a box to-night.”

“ I think I did.”

“ And didn’t you hear the answer that was made ?”

“ No. What was it ?”

“ ‘ These are our box tickets, which neither my colleague nor I shall use to-night ; I am just going to send them to Hookham’s: if you drive straight there, you may secure them and the box. We don’t suffer him to charge more than the fair subscription price for ours.’ Good heavens ! you don’t look astonished, *now* ! —at women of fashion *selling* their Opera tickets !”

Mrs. Valacourt fell a laughing: "What, you think it desperately mean, Emily?"

"I protest, I felt myself colour with shame for her,—and so, I thought, did the lady, who probably expected an offer of the loan of the tickets, when she began her speech."

"No; the lady knew better, I promise you. Why, child, it's what every body does, and it would be absurd to make a scruple of it."

"Then, I must say, I glory in observing that my dear aunt does not allow herself to do things, that she is willing to excuse in others. You have *given* your box for Saturday."

"I have not the least ambition of being thought better than my neighbours. "*Il faut hurler avec les Loups,*' that's my maxim; and my motive for *giving* my box will lose all its merit in your romantic eyes, my dear, when I tell you, that its my mode of keeping some vulgar distant

relations in good-humour, for not being invited to my parties."

Emily looked as she felt, disappointed by the explanation. "And, after all," continued her aunt, "what is there more in selling your Opera tickets, than in opening your house to a subscription concert? from which you derive the advantage of amusing your friends at another person's expense: you might as well call *that* letting out your house by the night!"

"And not be very wide off the mark," thought Emily; but she was silent, perceiving, in her aunt's eagerness of vindication, that she would be hurt at her dissent.

Mrs. Valacort being of opinion, that her niece must have had quite enough of the Opera, having once sat it out, from beginning to end, now settled her evening plans according to their accustomed routine; which took in the last half act; and the best part of the ballet. She

was willing, however, for once, to stay it *all* out; to show Emily the humours of the “crush-room,” as Miss E—— has so happily named it. Having apprised Colonel Maxwell of this intention in the morning, he determined to attend upon them; to guard the timid little rustic from what she might there have to encounter.

Nothing, however, beyond the usual shoving and elbowing occurred; except a more than common quarrel among the coachmen in the street; in consequence of which no one got away for more than an hour. The affray ended by the loss of a wheel to one carriage; by another having its pannel smashed; and by the coachman who had begun the broil (in cutting across the line) having forced on his horses with such violence, that he could not save one of them from spiking itself upon the iron rails; by which means it was all but killed. This last disaster being imparted, with some appearance of concern, by a gentleman

who had been spectator of the mischief, to the lady who owned the equipage; she, with admirable calmness, answered, "'Tis of very little consequence, they are only jobs!"

Emily, who was within hearing, and had shuddered at the account, literally started with surprise at this answer.

"You are not aware," Colonel Maxwell observed, "what a school of philosophy the world is."

"I desire, Maxwell, you will be sparing of your sarcasms," said Mrs. Valacort, as he put them into their carriage: "she is but too well inclined to reprobate manners that, after all, must be given way to; for, of all things, I should hate to see her affect singularity."

"She will never affect any thing, if I read her right;" he replied; "but she has bewitched Lady Sarah and Marianne in her short visit; so you must allow me to take means of following up the acquaintance, by bringing my niece to your breakfast-table to-morrow."

Miss Maxwell expected afterwards to have accompanied Emily to Knightsbridge; but the opinion of the surgeon being stated, that plan was delayed: a very earnest petition was then preferred, for the pleasure of Mrs. Valacort and Miss Villars's company to a small party, Lady Sarah had collected for the evening; and Mrs. Valacort, too well-bred to betray the reluctance she felt; gave way, with a good grace, to Emily's eager solicitude to accept the invitation. She did not, however, fail, as soon as they were alone, to caution her against accepting other invitations which this might lead to, amongst 'so quizzical and pedantic a set.'

Emily's pleasure equalled her surprise, at the contrast between this reprobated society, and that to which she had hitherto been introduced. They drove up to the door without risk of neck or limb, and found elbow-room and good sense within; titled and untitled people, whose names were familiar to her ear, and ex-

cited her curiosity both to see and hear them ; interesting, agreeable conversation substituted for the eternal repetition of, " Are you going to Mrs. this?" — " Have you been at Lady t'other?" — " Dreadful getting up!" — " Expected a pole through the pannel every moment!—and, nobody here, after all!" These, with the various comments upon dress and beauty, that naturally follow, had constituted the whole amusement as far as had appeared in any of the assemblies they had yet frequented ; and very warm was the defence Emily made, of the party she had so greatly enjoyed, when her aunt now endeavoured to attach ridicule to it ; and very earnest was her entreaty to be permitted to frequent, as occasion might offer, society so much more suited to her home-bred taste.

" Aye! this was just the provoking result Mrs. Valacort had foreseen ; but she could assure her she had seen by much the best of them at Lady Sarah's."

CHAP. XVII.

THE preparations for seeing masks had obliged Mrs. Valacort to give up her bed-chamber, to complete the suite of apartments ; in consequence of which, she slept upon the second floor, and the staircase to it, was a continuation of the backstair.

As she was going down to breakfast, she had stopped to give some farther orders to the new housekeeper, who was attending her ; and, in looking back to her, she missed a step — and only saved herself from coming down headlong by catching hold of the baluster ; by which means she gave herself a twist, that sprained her ankle, and broke her right arm.

Here was a most unlooked-for check to all pleasurable proceedings. Not immediately conscious, however, that the bone was broken, Mrs. Valacort proposed putting the arm in a sling, and lying upon a sofa with the sprained ankle; in preference to putting off the expected company, "for which there was so little time; and the world would be so disappointed—and the amusement would charm away the sense of pain."

Mr. Valacort happened, unluckily, to be out of the way. Emily, however shocked, at this tenaciousness of amusement, could make no head against it by herself: but she had sent off for a very able auxiliary in the surgeon. A——C—— pronounced it to be a fracture, ordered her immediately to bed; and, whilst he was attending to all the various exigences of the case, Mr. Valacort came in; and received strict injunctions to keep the patient perfectly quiet, as the most likely means of averting the violence of the fever which, he apprehended,

pain would soon bring on. Most reluctantly did Mrs. Valacort give up the point of the masks being admitted, without making her accident known; and "any very delightful ones might be introduced to her bed-side," she said; but their being let in, at all, was so peremptorily over-ruled, she was at length obliged to submit. And, indeed, pretty severe pain soon came in aid of the surgeon's authority. Emily anticipated a miserably protracted recovery with so refractory a patient.

The fever ran quite as high as had been foreseen; and Emily was unremitting in her attendance.

As she was one day sitting by the bed-side, in anxious hope, of the invalid awakening refreshed from a doze she had fallen into; a letter was put into her and. It was from aunt Katty.

As it has already appeared that she valued herself upon her 'knack in letter-writing,' it will not be doubted that she began in the proper style of an apolo-

getical exordium, followed by all the ‘hope’ and ‘trust’ respecting Mrs. Valacort’s recovery, that the case naturally called for; all of which was duly ornamented with a redundancy of capital letters, dashes, and flourishes that might have emulated the *lacs d’amour* of Mad. de Sevigné’s Princesse de Tarente. The first page being thus filled, very much to her satisfaction, she proceeded to say:—

“ Things go on with us here pretty much in the usual way; though I must confess that, what with one thing or another, we are all a good deal out of sorts. My poor brother being confined to his bed with the gout in his feet and knees; but when I see him getting low, I exhort him to be cheerful, and set him the example; for, as I tell him, let what will betide *me*, he should never find me like that Patience in the play, you know, ‘sitting moping in green and yellow on the monument:’ so that made him laugh and say, in his funny way, ‘The D——l,

Katt! that would be a ticklish seat for your little round person, indeed!’ and I was very glad I had thought of any quotation to amuse him; and, I pray God, the disorder may not be getting up into his head and stomach: but, as I tell him, if it should, it is the will of Heaven, and, as such, we must submit to it.

“ Talking of that puts me in mind that we have no supply of flannel in our school; and I saw an advertisement of a cheap shop somewhere in Wapping; so, whenever Mrs. Valacort takes her airing that way, I should be glad you would make purchase of a piece.—Well, then, to go on with the family history, there’s my poor sister can’t attend upon her husband herself, being laid up with rheumatism in her head, and, as I tell her, I shouldn’t wonder if it turned to a rheumatic fever; and I have been persuading her to take some of Steer’s opodeldic, or of the *Kayer putty* thing, you know, that comes from the Indies; and the worst of

all is, that my niece Delmere, who would be of so much use in all this distress, is confined at home, on account of poor dear little Aggy's shocking accident ;— so take it altogether, to be sure it's dismal enough : but they wish it to be kept from you, so pray take no notice in your answer, my dear ; only I thought it would be agreeable to you to know the truth."

She then proceeds with all the gossip of the village ; ends her letter in style, by catching at a fortunate word, to give a happy turn to the conclusion ; after which follows the postscript.

" P. S. I can't find the newspaper for the direction about the flannel, and I've forgot the name of the shop and the street, but suppose anybody thereabouts will be able to tell you. And I hope and trust, my dear niece, you won't make yourself uneasy at what I have been telling you about our distresses here, because that might spoil your plea-

sure in London sadly, which I should be very sorry for. And I forgot to mention that my niece Delmere is in great distress besides, on account of Winny being obliged to go home to her mother, because her sister is dead, and Aggy takes on so shockingly at parting with her."

Emily was thrown into a state of extreme agitation by the contents of this letter: her anxious wish to fly instantly to the succour of the invalids at the Priory, was combated by a keen sense of the cruelty she should be guilty of to her aunt, who seemed to rest solely on her, for every comfort under her present sufferings. In this dilemma her brother found her, when he called to make his daily enquiry after Mrs. Valacort.

Having read the letter with much attention, he was of opinion, that one-half of the alarm might fairly be placed to the account of aunt Katty's mode of seeing and describing; and having called

to his sister's recollection various instances of the inaccuracy of her statements, without being able entirely to tranquillise her, he kindly offered to set out himself immediately; with the promise of making a faithful report, by which she might be guided in determining upon the most urgent claims to her care. This she thankfully accepted; and soon succeeded in recovering sufficient apparent composure, to conceal the whole matter from her aunt, till she should have more correct information.

As Henry was hurrying from the door, he was met by Sir Edward Arundel, to whom he imparted his proposed journey, and its cause. The unexplained accident, which was stated to have befallen Agatha, awakened so very lively an interest in his hearer, that he declared, he could not rest satisfied without ascertaining the nature of it himself; and they accordingly set out together.

A very few hours brought them to the Priory ; and their fears were considerably alleviated by the very first object that caught their eye, which was Agatha, bounding along the lime-walk, with the activity and playfulness of a young fawn, and Katty waddling after her ; who, the moment she recognised them, exclaimed, “ Merciful gracious ! how surprising ! — What can have brought you so unexpectedly, Henry ? ”

“ Your letter, my good aunt.”

Nothing could equal the astonishment of Katty, into whose cloudy brain, cause and effect, had never yet found their way in due order.

“ My letter ! ” she cried, “ why I forbid Emily to mention a word of it ! ”

“ But it frightened poor Emily out of all caution,” he replied.

“ Why, then, I dare say she overlooked the postscript ; for in that I particularly charged her, not to let what I had told her spoil her pleasure in

London: so now you see the upshot will be my never telling her the truth again."

The truth, however, it afterwards appeared, was pretty much what Henry conjectured, that no cause whatever for alarm had existed. Mr. Villars's attack of the gout was the slightest imaginable; Mrs. Villars's rheumatism in her head, which was neither more nor less than the *tooth-ach*, was cured by the extraction of the tooth; and Agatha's shocking accident was a slightly broken shin, which had caused her aunt to keep her quiet one day, by confinement to the sofa.

During the dialogue between Katty and her nephew, Agatha had flown to Sir Edward, and was clinging round his neck (for it should have been mentioned that the gentlemen had alighted from their carriage on first perceiving them,) pouring all her fondness for aunt Delmere into his delighted ear; when she

herself came up, and expressed her pleasure on seeing them, indiscriminately to both, with frank and cordial kindness.

A little less of such frank avowal, would have been more congenial to Sir Edward's own feelings. Still, however, he was sensible that acknowledged friendship, was a step gained; but yet there remained much to be done before he could hope to ripen it into a softer sentiment, and his secret must continue to be carefully concealed.

Lord Cranmore had met the travellers just as they were stepping into their chaise, and renewed the friendly offer of his cottage for any time it might suit Sir Edward's convenience to occupy it; and Sir Edward was always conscious of a something so remarkably salubrious in the air of the Hampshire downs, he told Henry, that he felt strongly inclined to remain; and give his nerves a week's respite from the smoky atmosphere and hot rooms of London.

This proposal was strenuously encouraged by his friends at the Priory, in whom he had now excited a powerful interest for himself. And Henry returned to town without delay to quiet the apprehensions of Emily.

CHAP. XVIII.

SIR Edward's week was imperceptibly verging to a fortnight ; when, as he one morning pensively trod his accustomed path from Boxmount Cottage to the Priory, ruminating upon some possible plea, for still protracting his stay without giving rise to suspicion of his true motive ; he was roused from his reverie by a concourse of villagers, and considerable bustle at the entrance of the corn-field through which his road lay.

On inquiring into the occasion, he was informed, that the stage, driving furiously down the hill, had caught the wheel of one of the machines in which wild beasts are conveyed for exhibition about the country ; and upset it with a

violence that had thrown the driver from his seat in front, caused the door to fly open behind, and the cage containing the lioness being also shattered by the shock, the animal had got loose, and was tearing about the field; the danger much increased by the height of the wheat, which prevented ascertaining her track: the people, in their fright, had collected what weapons of offence and defence they could lay hold of, and were in pursuit of her.

Whilst giving ear to this account, his eye caught Sophia with a book in her hand, unconscious of the alarm, approaching the stile from the lane into the field on the opposite side. Darting across with the velocity of lightning, he called to her, to stop! but not catching his meaning, she got over the stile, and was moving towards him, when, thrown wholly off his guard by terror, he frantically exclaimed, "O, my soul's idol!"—and reaching her at the same moment,

he caught her up, and, with supernatural strength, leaped with her in his arms across the stile, and fortunately perceiving a break in the high fence by the lane-side, he easily increased it, and put her through it, bidding her "take refuge in the barn;" which he had no sooner said, than he fell back against the outside of the paling himself, nearly fainting with the agitation and exertion, and unable to utter a word of explanation.

Sophia almost stunned with the rapidity of this extraordinary proceeding; and alarmed at the state in which she saw him, made an attempt to return over the paling to his assistance; when fright for her recalled his senses, so far as to enable him to make an effort to drive her back, with an agonized cry of "My heart's only treasure, for pity's sake remain!" and get over the paling himself.

The inclosure they were now in joined the farm-yard, and they sought security

in the barn ; where the farmer shortly after brought word that the creature was again in the custody of its keeper. The man had soon recovered the effects of his fall, and made his way to the scene of confusion, when the animal no sooner recognised him, than she came crouching to his feet, and submitted without resistance to be led back to her prison.

And here ended all fears for personal safety ; but alarm of a different nature had made its way to the bosom of Sophia. Sir Edward had only been able to attend her to the Priory, and thence hastened home in a state of most pitiable nervous debility ; disordered not only, by the agitation he had undergone, but by the overwhelming dread of having prematurely betrayed his passion.

Nor were his fears ungrounded ; the too tender epithets he had uttered, still rung in Sophia's ear ; and brought to her recollection various trifling incidents, which at the time had passed unnoticed,

but now recurred in "confirmation strong" of his cherishing sentiments so inimical to his peace, that every feeling of friendship and humanity combined, to urge her immediate adoption of so decided a line of conduct, as would effectually check what, could only be productive to him, of a renewal of former misery.

The discovery was painful to her in the extreme. In the full reliance on her own unalterable faith, to the memory of Colonel Delmere, she had given way to sentiments of esteem and friendship for Sir Edward, without fear of injuring his tranquillity any more than her own by the confidential intimacy they had produced: a firm believer in the doctrine, that true love can be felt but once, and knowing what he had suffered in the cause, she had not considered this species of intercourse with him, in the same light in which she would have viewed it with any other man; in short,

the peculiarity of their respective situations, had lulled her into security ; and the numberless amiable traits of character occasionally brought forward by Agatha, had imperceptibly softened her feelings towards him, far beyond her own consciousness of their nature ; for she rested her thoughts very much upon the great importance he must ever be of, to the future destiny of her little charge, and had of late cultivated his good-will with the most unsuspecting solicitude.

Now, however, that she so plainly saw how much he might have been deceiving himself, there could be no hesitation as to the manner in which she was called upon to act ; not, as in the case of Lord Leonard, with repulsive reserve, but a frank and friendly communication of her apprehensions, the very first opportunity that offered.

Sir Edward was far too much disturbed, to be able to join the society at the Priory that day ; and a night of feverish agitation ensued, which equally disqua-

lified him for stirring abroad on the next; by these means he had full time for deliberation as to his farther proceedings; and he honourably determined to abide fairly and unequivocally by the sentiments he had so involuntarily betrayed: could he have maintained his silence, it might have borne the interpretation of diffidence, even to himself; but now it became an act of duplicity unworthy of his character, to attempt to do away the impression his words must have excited. He must now come boldly forward with the avowal, and stand to the risk.

But with such a dread, however, of the result did he finally present himself before the sovereign arbitress of his fate, that a month's illness would scarcely have produced a greater alteration in his looks.

He felt somewhat re-assured by the friendly cordiality with which she acknowledged his most effectual protection against the danger that had threatened

her; and he stammered out his apprehension of having undesignedly betrayed feelings that might offend her.

“ They grieved more than they offended,” she replied.

“ O reserve your grief for the day when I may *complain* of sufferings; but grant me to devote my life to the attempt of gaining your favour.”

“ You have gained so much favour, Sir Edward, as would ensure your contributing materially to the comfort of my life, provided your wishes are confined to the enjoyment of simple friendship; those I can frankly offer you, but beyond those *I shall never go*.”

“ I ask no more, till time shall have convinced you ——”

“ Time can bring no additional conviction with it,” she interrupted; “ of your merits I am fully aware; if it were possible I could think any man worthy to replace Delmere, *you* would be that man. I speak so frankly, that you may

give the more implicit credit to what I shall with equal frankness add; my tie of fidelity to him reaches beyond this life. He never knew another love but me; he has repeatedly sworn it, and if he lost me would vow eternal celibacy for the remainder of his days: could I fail to reciprocate the vow?"

Full well did Sir Edward know the fallacy of Delmere's assertion; but the sacredness even of past friendship sealed his lips; his emotion, however, was very apparent.

Sophia went on: "From an engagement such as this, I must cease to respect myself, before I could ever wish to be absolved; the romance of my life shall be, to preserve my faith to him pure and unspotted as when I pledged it at the altar, until I reach that blessed state where our spirits may again be united in joys ineffable for evermore."

"Romance, indeed!" Sir Edward thought; but he saw in the enthusiastic

turn of her mind, how much consolation she derived from this airy structure of her own raising. Incapable of seeking to obtain any advantage at the expense of her slightest gratification, he only replied, "To the purity of your own mind I shall trust for doing justice to mine; very undeserving should I be of the candour so exclusively your own, with which you now treat me; if I could cherish a wish beyond the high honour and inexpressible gratification of the sentiments you have condescended to avow. Believe me, Mrs. Delmere, I am not the slave of sense; to be received, acknowledged as your chosen friend, to be allowed to study your happiness or pleasure in every action of my life—will give it a value so greatly beyond any thing I could ever again have hoped to live for, that I should never ask for more: grant me but unlimited confidence, and you will bestow happiness, exquisite and pure as your own lovely form and mind!"

“ To any other than yourself, Sir Edward, I should hesitate to utter the observation I am going to make, lest it should be misconstrued ; but your mind is not cast in the common mould, you will not ascribe to female vanity what is the result of real solicitude for your happiness. Allow me to say, that your expressions were not those of simple friendship, the other morning.”

“ I will not attempt to mislead you, Mrs. Delmere, by disclaiming the feelings that actuated me, in that alarming moment ; but give me credit for the utmost sincerity, when I assert, that whatever I then felt, you have now changed its nature. I will not pretend to deny the purpose with which I this morning sought you, nor the pang I experienced at the outset of this conversation ; but your subsequent frank avowal of sentiments so congenial to every nobler feeling of my soul, seems to

raise me to an emulation with your own purity ; and trust me, you shall have no cause to withdraw your confidence."

" Do not attribute it to doubt of your sincerity, if I say, that so very sudden a revulsion would require a confirmation from time, to be safely relied on ; a temporary absence might give it stability—"

" Absence !" interrupting her with a look of dismay, " then you do not give credit to the disinterestedness of my feelings !"

" Indeed, I give perfect credit to your sincerity in asserting it ; but a year or two would ——"

" Good Heavens ! a year or two !" turning still paler than when he had first come into her apartment ; " the very thought is death !"

Sophia, hurt at the wretched expression of his countenance, and probably biassed, imperceptibly to herself, by something beyond what she believed to be her actuating motive, that of retaining him

within reach of extending his protection to Agatha as occasion might require, gave way to his objections with a facility her better judgment would have condemned, had it had fair play ; but when has judgment fair play against the plausibility of romantic deductions ? not certainly in such a headlong enthusiastic disposition as that of Sophia : so she finally agreed to his solicitation of being admitted to the confidential intimacy of friendship, with the freedom of a brother, until he should forfeit his privilege by the first symptom betraying a less disinterested feeling ; she was then without hesitation to give him notice of his failure, by recurring to the necessity of absence, to which he would submit without a murmur.

And the compact was sealed on the hand she held out to him in friendship ; but the kiss imprinted on it, had such a mixture of respectful timidity in its fraternal tenderness, as might have satisfied

an impartial witness of the very different character it bore, from what the parties were aware of.

Sir Edward, raised and gratified beyond expression, to find himself an object of so much greater interest than he had dared to hope, sincerely believed that he had reached the summit of happiness; but, alas! in love, as in ambition,

“On wishes, wishes grow.”

Leave we them, however, for the present, in the full enjoyment of their delusion: how seldom is happiness any other! and let us return to Emily's trying task of attendance upon her unruly patient.

END OF VOL. II.



DOMESTIC SCENES.

VOL. III.

Printed by Strahan and Spottiswoode,
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DOMESTIC SCENES.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By LADY HUMDRUM,

AUTHOR OF MORE WORKS THAN BEAR HER NAME.

Tedious the tale with lengthen'd lectures fraught :
We're less by precept than example taught.

ANONYMOUS.

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1820.



DOMESTIC SCENES.

CHAP. I.

THE return of Henry from the Priory entirely relieved Emily's anxieties respecting its inmates ; nor could she help being amused with Katty's reliance on the efficacy of her P. S. ; and still greater amusement did she afterwards, very contrary to her intention, afford her invalid, when in her zeal for the school, and ignorance of localities, she imparted the commission for cheap flannel. The idea of an ' airing Wapping way,' in quest, too, of a shop of which neither the name nor the street could be specified, was so good a joke in Mrs. Valacort's

hands, who had a quick sense of the ridiculous, as not to be readily relinquished. Extremely vexed to have given rise to it, after such a careful suppression of all the rest of the letter, in the anxious desire of saving her correspondent from exposure, Emily earnestly pleaded poor aunt Katty's remote education (brought up in Cornwall by her grandmother), and never having been an inhabitant of London; but in vain, the laugh continued of provokingly frequent recurrence.

As yet, however, laughing was out of the question; the patient's sufferings were acute, and not a little aggravated by the fretfulness with which they were endured, although her indefatigable nurse turned her attention with the most unremitting assiduity to their alleviation.

This attendance did not make Emily unmindful of Patty, although her visits to Knightsbridge were necessarily for a time discontinued; but she received daily accounts of progressive amendment.

When Miss Maxwell was at length admitted to the poor girl, repeated bursts of tears had been the consequence, but no material return of incoherency; and these promising symptoms induced the surgeon to allow of her being informed that her mother had escaped from the flames, as it was believed, unhurt—but had not since been heard of.

Miss Maxwell having engaged that every step should be taken to discover what had become of her, Patty had now fallen into a calm but very depressed state—and resolutely resisted Miss Maxwell's proposal of accepting of an asylum in Lady Sarah's house, for the present—always recurring to her dread that Mrs. Hickson would betray her to George, of whom her apprehensions remained in full force.

As soon as Mrs. Valacort's fever had a little subsided, she called for the list of daily inquiries, and expressed much satisfaction at its length, and at the names

she found on it. On one in particular, her eye rested with marked pleasure. "This manoeuvre of mine has succeeded then!" she exclaimed exultingly.

There was something very grating to Emily's conceptions, both in the word and the boast; so she made no answer. Mrs. Valacort, without attending to it, went on, "You must know I had a very strong desire to visit Lady ——, and had made an ineffectual attempt towards it by the intervention of a third person; but her visiting ticket having been lately lost by mistake at my door, I took advantage of the circumstance to return it in a very civil note, stating that being aware it was not intended, I could not take the liberty of availing myself of the mistake, farther than to say, that I meant to see masks on Thursday, and having understood that her daughter Lady Mary was prohibited from going to masquerades, if it could be agreeable to bring her to see masks, there should be the exception

on her ticket of being admitted unmasked; and the consequence is, you see, that she has called in person to inquire after me; so now our visiting will be a thing of course."

"And why is visiting Lady ——— so very desirable?"

"Because she is one of the *exclusems*."

"My dear aunt, what are they?"

"The *ton par excellence*, who only associate with each other, and have a slang peculiar to themselves."

So true it is, that let ambition take what course it may, no attainment can satisfy it whilst any thing remains to be attained. Mrs. Valacort had reached that height of fashionable distinction which sets titles at nought. She looked down on many a duchess and countess, as absolute quizzes and fograms—she was admitted to the select parties at B——— and C——— house; but the *exclusems*, as they call themselves, still soared pre-eminent in notoriety; and all

her former atchievements sunk into nothing, whilst this was unobtained. "For she could assure her niece it had occasioned her more anxiety and vexation when repulsed, than she cared to acknowledge."

Emily heartily wished she had not heard it acknowledged now. The triumph in the manœuvre was, however, of short duration; for in Mrs. Valacort's eagerness to complete it, she sent for the porter up to ask what Lady —— had said? when, alas! it appeared that it was Lady Mary only who had called, and taken the opportunity of making her mother appear more civil than she would ever have thought of being herself; for Lady Mary was one of the few instances that mothers may serve as beacons, as well as examples. She was altogether as obliging, as the countess was haughty; and here ended the result of the manœuvre, for of Mrs. Valacort's card of thanks, when it finally went, no farther notice was taken.

The list of inquiry was so considerable, and so many people were put down as having called themselves, that Emily expected the house would overflow with visitors, whenever her aunt should be well enough to admit all her select friends; and she looked forward with pleasure to the freedom she might by this means obtain of devoting an hour occasionally to Lady Sarah and Miss Maxwell, who continued to gain upon her esteem every time she saw them.

Meanwhile it appeared from Sophia's letters, that she did not mean to let Winny return to her place about Agatha—and a disappointment in her expectation of the speedy arrival of Mrs. Fitzclare was the more felt, she said, as she was not quite satisfied with her present attendant—this immediately suggested the idea of Patty's fitness for the situation. Emily consulted her aunt upon it; who, eager for any thing that could vary the tedium of her confinement, said she

must see her before she could give an opinion.

Miss Maxwell, who had now gained daily admission to the sick room, offered to fetch her, which was accepted. The moment she appeared, Mrs. Valacort exclaimed, "Lord bless me! how like she is to Almeria Delmere!" and her husband agreed in the opinion. Emily then mentioned her also having been struck on first seeing her, with a general air of resemblance to Agatha, which had greatly increased the interest she felt for her.

Patty's manner and answers to the various interrogatories put to her, made a favourable impression. She warmly expressed her gratitude for the kindness she had met with, and seemed very eager for the situation proposed to her, provided her mother, when found, did not again require her care and attendance.

On the subject of her mother, some curiosity was excited, but she was reluc-

tant to say much. Her mother had met with misfortunes in early life, which had caused her to change her name to Benson, she said, but was silent upon the nature of them ; they had earned their livelihood by plain work—her father she had never seen—her mother would sometimes sink into a state of deep melancholy for weeks together, and had no support or comfort but her—and she knew of no relations.

All this afforded no clue for the researches setting on foot ; Miss Maxwell, however, engaged for their being unremittingly continued, and Mrs. Valacort approved of Patty's being immediately proposed to Mrs. Delmere, which Emily undertook with great alacrity.

Mrs. Valacort had never been confined two days by illness in her life, and she had every requisite for trying the patience of her nurses in the highest perfection. Her habits had all been fostered in the school of self-indulgence. She hated slops and insipids—murmured at every

species of restraint—loathed whatever she was allowed to take—insisted upon being tempted with high dishes—resisted early hours—took every method, in short, that could keep up her fever, and retard her recovery. Her impatience for admitting visitors too was unbounded ; she was convinced she should never get better, till her ennui could be relieved by seeing a rubber played by her sofa ; as to playing herself, that she knew she must long despair of, from the disability of her right arm ; had it but luckily been the left, the comfort might have been more speedily obtained.

The earliest opportunity was taken to bring her back to her own apartment on the first floor ; and the fever no sooner subsided, than she became resolute in ordering that the inquirers, who called in person, should be apprised of her intention to admit one at a time ; but this being the very gayest season of the year, when breakfastings and waltz practis-

ings, &c. &c. filled up the whole of the day as completely as balls and assemblies did of the night, the obliging solicitude of her intimates had considerably relaxed, particularly as it was understood that her confinement was likely to last through the summer; the personal calls were, therefore, now only followed up by the few who were ambitious of establishing some sort of claim upon the future civilities of so fashionable a woman, and even these deemed it quite sufficient to sit a quarter of an hour by her sofa in a forenoon occasionally. To her intimation of "How much greater the charity would be in an evening, if they could find leisure to bestow an hour or two upon a poor invalid;" they replied, with every assurance of their full intention to indulge themselves in so great a pleasure, and the pains they would take to mention her wish wherever they went; but charitable intentions were a little apt to be obliterated by matters of greater

moment with Mrs. Valacort's associates ; and as to *friendship*, she knew exactly the value of *that* in her *set* ; and forebore to have recourse to it, till she should be well enough to hold out the attraction of a rubber at French fives. Nor was it very long before she insisted upon making this experiment ; being now regularly moved on to the ottomane in her boudoir, she persuaded Mr. Valacort to assemble three whist players, and let the table be so placed that she might overlook his hand, and bet upon the rubber ; the consequence was, that she was kept up beyond the proper time—that she agitated herself by the importance of her bets, and cavilling at her husband's play, who might have won a rubber which he lost—and having moreover obstinately ordered a rich soup for her supper she passed a sleepless night—the fever returned with renewed force, and the knitting of the bone was of course protracted.

When her surgeon was informed of what had given rise to the relapse, he became peremptory in his mandate; and enforced the importance of her submitting to it so strenuously to Mr. Valacort and Emily, that they fully saw the necessity of resisting her imprudences in future, and agreed to be steady and united; and, in fact, it required considerably more of firmness than either of them had been in the habit of opposing to her wishes to withstand the various modes she took to obtain her own way; particularly when she contrived to make herself considerably worse by the effects of mere irritation; however, they stood their ground, and she was at length obliged to submit, and be satisfied with her family party, and the quiet addition of only Miss Maxwell. As she again became better, Colonel Maxwell and Lord Cranmore were admitted; and these supplied amusement, not only by their conversation, but by bringing any

new entertaining publication that appeared; and many that had long been published were new to Mrs. Valacort, who never found a moment to look into any book beyond the 'Court Guide.'

Emily was usually the reader, and all the more animated from the desire of captivating her aunt's attention, who was in reality far from being destitute of mind; it had only lain dormant under the influence of that powerful soporific, dissipation, which steals imperceptibly over the senses, deadening them by degrees to all the finer feelings of moral life. She was soon compelled to acknowledge that an evening might be got over without either cards or scandal; and it was not very long before she felt, and confessed, that they passed not unpleasantly; for the hour of eleven sometimes came with a rapidity that rather surprised her.

The harp and pianoforte also occasionally found their place in producing an interesting variety; and the expres-

sion Emily knew how to give to the simplest ballad, called up a new taste in Mrs. Valacort, which proved her to be not altogether as devoid of ear as she had believed; in short, rational feelings began to resume their place in her mind. Lady Sarah and Miss Maxwell, those reprobated blue-stockings, became not only bearable, but even desirable companions.

Here was a triumph for Emily! and a good arising out of evil beyond what she could have dared to hope. O! that it might but acquire power to resist the fascinations that would again assail her restoration to health! that it might not merely be the result of disappointed vanity, in discovering the hollowness of worldly friendship!

CHAP. II.

LORD Cranmore had for some time past seen daily increasing cause for displeasure in his sister's conduct ; finding Lord Belmont blind, or choosing to appear so, he felt the necessity of taking some step ; and though doubtful of his own influence over her, he determined to try its power before he had recourse to other interference.

She had just risen, when he called upon her, and was preparing for her airing ; he proposed accompanying her, to which she assented in a manner that clearly showed it was not her wish.

“ I can so seldom find you otherwise than surrounded, Sabina,” he began, as they were stepping into the carriage, “ that a tête a tête will have all the charm of novelty to recommend it.”

“ A domestic tête a tête should have some peculiar recommendation to give it a zest ; for in general it is but dull work,” was the ungracious reply.

“ I cannot help regretting,” he resumed, “ that Belmont’s post should be of a nature to require so much of his attendance, as it robs you both of his society and protection.”

“ I have no particular fancy for his being tied to my apron-string.”

“ No ; of course it is not desirable for a woman to be made particular in any way.”

“ I don’t know as to that, if it were in a way that could flatter one !”

“ The affection of a husband is undoubtedly what a wife might be excused for taking a pride in.”

“ I am in no great danger of having mine excited in that quarter ; you must be sensible that it is not easy to be more completely neglected than I am by mine.”

“ I am sensible certainly that Belmont is too fashionable to make a parade of his affection in public, and unfortunately too much engrossed by his office to admit of his finding time for domestic enjoyments.”

“ Dometic enjoyments !” she repeated with a sneer ; “ I am as willing to absolve him, as he can be to escape from those ; but I confess I did not look for the humiliation of being so publicly slighted in so very short a time.”

“ If you see cause, my dear Sabina, to accuse him of want of affection, it will I am sure induce you to be doubly guarded in encouraging the admiration of others.”

“ What do you mean by that, Cranmore ?”

" I mean that an apparently neglected wife becomes an immediate object of pursuit to the dissolute, even were she not possessed of a hundredth part of your attractions; in you there is every additional motive for the most scrupulous caution."

" Ha! ha! ha!—what a dainty speech! a most enviable situation I shall have got into, indeed; if, because I have had the misfortune to bestow my hand upon an insensible, I should be obliged to shut my eyes and ears to all the rest of mankind! No, no—a little innocent flirtation is all the comfort left me now, and trust me, I'll not forego that from any regard to ill-natured misconstruction."

" You will, I think, give me credit, Sabina, for not being prone to ill-natured misconstruction, especially where you are in question; but I must say that I could wish to see you keep the Duke of Ulswater at a greater distance."

" The Duke of Ulswater!" colouring

violently, " I should be glad to know why you select him in particular, when there are at least half a dozen equally devoted to me !"

" Because the Duke marks by his manner, either that he considers himself, or wishes the world to consider him, in a very different degree of favour from any of your other admirers ; but even to talk of admirers to a married woman appears to me an insult to her delicacy."

" Lord ! Lord !—such nonsense !—do pray look round, and see whether there be a married woman of my acquaintance without a *Cicisbeo*, except Lady Daventry, indeed, and Mrs. Alston ; the one such a scarecrow, that the wonder is, how even her immense fortune could allure any man to approach her ; and the other, with her turtle cooing after her wherever she goes, and ready to fight every man that but looks towards her."

" It is but too true indeed, Sabina, that the circle of your acquaintance offer

examples of profligacy and depravity in abundance ; but far be it from my sister to make any of those her excuse for deviating, in the security of conscious innocence, into such odious appearances!" This was spoken with a seriousness of emotion that rather embarrassed her.

" Pray, Cranmore, has Belmont commissioned you to admonish me on this head?"

" God forbid that Belmont should have the cause of alarm given him which I feel! no—it is my own anxiety that prompts my speaking to you upon this delicate subject."

" It would at all events in him have looked something like caring about me ; but I beg leave to reap this benefit at least from the misfortune of having a husband, to hold myself amenable to no other jurisdiction."

" And is it possible, Sabina, that you should expect your family to remain un-

concerned in any thing that may affect your reputation?"

"Reputation! Lord, whose reputation can escape from the shafts of envy and malice?—I shall certainly not give way to such considerations, whilst I know my own innocence; time enough to become guarded when there is any thing to hide, as Joseph Surface observes; besides, don't you see that I have my husband's sister always at my elbow? what better security can you, or can the world desire for propriety of conduct than that?"

"If there be no better security in your own principles, Sabina—Alas for my sister!"

"I declare, Cranmore, you're becoming quite a Methodist; or rather you are imbibing all the antiquated notions of that prude Emily Villars; though, by the bye, even she is no enemy to a little innocent flirtation!"

"I abominate the very word, Sabina! Innocence can scarcely ever go along

with it. But what do you mean by accusing Miss Villars? surely, if ever immaculate purity dwelt in a human breast, it will be found in hers!"

"Oh dear! of course—so every lover thinks of his mistress—but I suppose you know she was dying for Belmont before he married me, and now carries on a respectable platonic intercourse with him!"

"Impossible! Miss Villars is—"

"Ask Laura what she is!" interrupted Sabina.

"Lady Laura is no oracle of mine," colouring at the painful idea awakened in his mind.

Just at that moment the conversation was stopped, by the Duke of Ulswater's appearance at the side of the carriage, which cleared up to Lord Cranmore the meaning of his sister's ungracious acceptance of his proposal, for, contrary to her habitual custom of airing in Hyde Park, she had gone the Edgware road.

The Duke laid his hand upon the coach-door, and was beginning a very familiar address, when he half started upon perceiving who was with her. "The last person he could have expected to find cooped up in a carriage for the purpose of an airing," he said, affecting to laugh.

"So I should suppose," was the dry reply.

He congratulated himself, however, upon the circumstance, and his having so luckily taken that road for quietness, as his young horse was not yet trained to the humours of the Park ; and he then proceeded to propose what he said he could not have ventured to do, had she been accompanied by a less respectable chaperon—that she should alight and accept of his arm—the day having turned out so uncommonly fine.

Lord Cranmore remonstrated with his sister upon the risk of her walking in her feeble state.

But having recovered from the confusion the Duke's appearance had caused her, from a doubt of how her brother might behave to him, she now, with admirable presence of mind, seized the opportunity of making *him* seem to sanction the very intimacy he was reprobating. She averred that walking was exactly what Doctor —— most strongly recommended, when it could be done without fatigue; and therefore she had meant to propose to her brother, driving to the Bayswater gate of Kensington Gardens, at their return, as the number of seats made that preferable to keeping on a longer stretch; and two arms were better support than one, if the Duke liked to accompany them.

This was of course politely acceded to, and Lord Cranmore, from a compassionate unwillingness to agitate his sister in her present situation, was compelled to countenance what he could

not avert. His deportment, however, was marked by a taciturnity, and a frigidity of manner so unequivocal, as could not well pass unobserved by his Grace.

CHAP. III.

LORD Cranmore had given little credit to his sister's assertion of Emily's love for Belmont, but he quite believed Belmont to have been attached to her, and recollected many instances of his still continuing so ; but none of any encouragement given ; on the contrary, he had seen her cold and repulsive to him. He was wounded, however, with the thought of so dishonourable a circumstance as his sister's husband's daring to nourish a passion for the pure and lovely being, to whom his very existence was devoted. He had from the first moment of his ad-

miration of her, determined upon the frank avowal of his own situation, before he ventured to solicit her hand ; but the timidity of true passion, combined with the fear of offending her delicacy, by the disclosure he had to make, had thus far checked the embarrassing explanation ; he now, however, gained fortitude from anxiety to become her authorised protector, and resolved to run the hazard without delay.

The conversation in Stanhope Street had turned, on the preceding evening, upon a case somewhat similar to Lord Cranmore's own ; and Emily had expressed unqualified disapprobation of a lady who had married with the knowledge that her husband, a Scotchman, had grown-up children by a prior connection ; and fully apprised that, provided he had contracted no other marriage, he might have legitimated them, according to the laws of his own country, by ac-

knowledging their mother to be his wife, even upon his death-bed.

Mrs. Valacort had sedulously changed the subject upon observing the agitation betrayed in Lord Cranmore's countenance. Alarmed lest something might have come to Emily's knowledge to call forth such strength of expression, he was the more forcibly impelled to hasten the explanation; and on the ensuing morning called at so early an hour, as to preclude the danger of interruption, and sent up an earnest request to see Miss Villars in the drawing-room.

Thither, not in her most tranquil state, she soon came down to him.

With considerable circumlocution he led to her severe condemnation of Mrs. Jackson, the foregoing evening, and asked whether she carried her idea the length of excluding every one from marriage whose early unguardedness had been attended with similar consequences?"

Rather surprised at his recurrence to such a subject, as well as with the very indulgent terms in which he expressed himself, and not re-assured by his visible emotion and tremulous utterance, she hesitatingly pleaded disqualification to discuss the point.

But he repeated the question with increased earnestness, and she replied, "That she could imagine no plea of exemption for a parent's not rescuing his offspring from obloquy."

"In Scotland only could it be so averted," he said.

"I thought it was of a Scotchman we were speaking."

"But put the case elsewhere."

"I should conceive it then to turn upon the character and conduct of the mother; but surely, my lord, this is a strange subject for me to be urged upon, unless to make me sensible of my impropriety in bringing my opinion so forward last night."

He changed colour. "I seem to deserve so severe a reproof," he said, "for the apparent want of delicacy I am guilty of, in pressing such a point; but in very truth, Miss Villars,—I—I—am painfully constrained to it."—He stopt in the most evident confusion.

Emily looked at him with surprise.

"You cannot, Miss Villars, I think, have been unconscious—you must have perceived—that is, I mean I must have betrayed sentiments which—forgive my inability to find expressions for what I have to say—the destiny of my whole life hangs upon the result of this conversation."

He again stopped, unable to proceed.

Having felt no wish to discourage his sentiments, she could not account for the extraordinary dread he seemed to have in their disclosure; but not very able to speak herself, she awaited the recovery of his self-possession in silence.

After a struggle of some minutes, he

went on. "I have a confession to make that must degrade me in your eyes—an involvement of my early youth—" Again he stopped.

She now changed colour.

Without venturing to look up, he at length proceeded: "Do not, I conjure you, suspect me of profligacy; or of ever having harboured a premeditated design of seduction—I never for an instant attempted to deceive her by the most distant hint at marriage—I even fled when I became aware the liking was mutual—for she was good—innocent—but those about her were artful—and in an evil hour—what shall I say!—temptation triumphed over principle—and formed a connexion which—I cannot go on.—"

He sunk, overpowered by his emotion, on the sofa, and hid his face upon the end of it.

Little less agitated than himself, by a confession for which she was so unprepared,

Emily, however, had sufficient command of herself to say, "A connexion sacred in the eye of heaven, surely, if she was innocent and good—"

"O no!—not sacred in the light you take it!—never—never had I the most remote idea of making her my wife, or she of expecting it. Of her you should never have heard—but the children!—I could not bear to deceive you with respect to them—a lovely girl and boy."

"Assuredly, my lord, you owe yourself to them. I honour you for the feeling," speaking with assumed firmness and rising with dignity.

"O stay, Miss Villars!—stay!—do not misconceive me! I owe them every amends, save one!—not the sacrifice of the happiness of my whole life, if independently of them you could have deigned to embellish it—not to relinquish my adoration of you—"

"Excuse me, Lord Cranmore—this is a very unlooked-for trial. I do not scru-

ple to avow it is a trial, though I trust I shall prove equal to it—but—”

“Dearest! most candid of women!” throwing himself rapturously at her feet; “the trial ceases, the instant you consider it as such. I have only been impelled to this disclosure from the apprehension that an after discovery would sink me in your esteem, if you condescended to entrust the future happiness of your life to me; and now that this blessed avowal proves me not degraded in your eyes, no farther consideration is—”

“Hold, my lord!—hold!” interrupting him; “rise, I entreat you!—there is too surely cause for the most serious consideration! far more serious than can be thus hastily dismissed.—It is, indeed, a subject I am not at any rate qualified to judge of, without the assistance of my parents, whose opinion has ever determined any important act of my life.—”

“Surely, Miss Villars, in a point where

your feelings alone are concerned, you alone can judge——”

“ Excuse me, my lord !—in a case of such peculiar delicacy, my only security for not erring will be to refer it wholly to my mother. With her your lordship can enter into particulars, which it would neither become me to inquire into, or to be informed of.”

“ And can you ! whose ‘ wisdom is gentle ’ as that ‘ from above,’ can you, with a severity so foreign to your nature, refer me to a tribunal where the most rigid moral justice only may be looked for ? too well do I know the penalty I have there incurred !—but there are circumstances of mitigation, which to a mind so sweetly tempered with mercy as yours could not be pleaded in vain.”

“ You do not know my mother, Lord Cranmore, if you doubt her principles being tempered with all the mercy that a due regard for morals can admit of. You say there are mitigating circumstances——

to her those may be pleaded, with the certainty that full weight will be give to them. I cannot hear them—or even if I could,” she added precipitately, seeing him eager to interrupt her; “still must the ultimate decision rest with my mother—never should I know ease or comfort in acting contrary to her opinion.”

“But could I be so fortunate as to awaken any one sympathetic feeling in your breast; how much might it not contribute to soften Mrs. Villars’s verdict!”

“I entreat you not to urge me beyond my sense of right!—I have surely said enough to prove that I do not look with indifference to the result; but pray excuse me this morning. I really am unequal to the discussion—and suffer me to decline entering upon it again till I shall have stated to my mother what has now passed, and obtained her opinion to guide my future conduct!”

“Nay, then indeed, you leave me no

resource, but to make my own appeal to her, because all turns upon the details from which your delicacy shrinks ; but which, believe me, I should not offer to relate, if the slightest wound could be given to it by the communication."

Emily had been taken by surprise, and was conscious of her weakness ; she abided by her reference, and put an abrupt end to the conversation.

Much cause indeed she had to distrust herself ! Lord Cranmore had acquired that hold upon her affections, to which his merits entitled him, and of which she was not herself fully aware, till this very unforeseen blow seemed necessarily to sever them at once ; and in this first moment of dismay, she looked in vain for the fortitude that had so effectually rescued her in her former trial.

Finding that Miss Maxwell had been admitted to Mrs. Valacort, during Lord Cranmore's visit, she retired to her own apartment to recover some degree of

composure before she exposed her pale face to those inquiring eyes she did not yet wish to open to the subject, aware, from her present knowledge of her aunt's character, that she should be weakened instead of strengthened by *her* arguments.

‘ She was good and innocent ! ’—these words vibrated in her ear and upon her heart. If ‘ good and innocent ! ’ then betrayed—whether by him or those meaning to serve him, could make little difference. She was lost to virtue through his means,—wretched of course—and he certainly owed her the only reparation he could make—from this there seemed to be no appeal—unless, indeed, subsequent misconduct had rendered her unworthy!—but he had insinuated nothing of the kind—“ far ! far be it from the high soul of Lord Crammore ! ” she exclaimed, unconsciously to herself ; “ to seek shelter in mean subterfuge ! ”

This exclamation was followed by a

plentiful effusion of tears, which gave some relief to her oppressed heart.

It was a considerable length of time before she felt sufficiently recovered to venture into her aunt's presence; and the very instant she did so, the attack was made, which she had hoped to escape. Miss Maxwell, to whom she had looked as her shield of defence, was gone; her first inquiry had been for Emily, and being informed she was engaged with Lord Cranmore in the drawing-room, she had made this report to Mrs. Valacort upon gaining admission to her. Such acceptable intelligence at once awakened all the hopes and all the curiosity that might be expected on a subject of such deep interest—they were not to be concealed from so true a well-wisher to her niece; and she very frankly expressed her desire to be left alone, the moment Lord Cranmore was gone, that she might obtain the immediate communication of what had passed.

It may be supposed, that her patience had been put to the test during the time that elapsed before her niece made her appearance ; concluding, however, from the very delay that the subject had been agitating, and not surmising it possible to have had a result different from her wishes, she had conquered her eagerness for the particulars, so far as not to have sent to hurry her into her presence ; but she was no sooner within the door, than Mrs. Valacort, in her most triumphant tone, began, “ Well Emily !—has his lordship at length given utterance to the tender hopes and fears that have so long held warfare in his breast ?”

Emily was for a moment unable to reply.

“ Lord, my dear child ! what’s the matter ?—you look ready to sink into the earth, instead of raising your crest to the high honours that await you !—good heaven ! you terrify me to death ! what

ails you?—for mercy's sake, what has he been saying to you?"

"What reflects the highest honour upon his sincerity," said the agitated girl, "and makes it very clear, that neither his hopes nor his fears ought to turn upon me."

"Emily, are you mad?—what can you mean by *ought*? have not his every look and action proclaimed his whole soul devoted to you ever since your arrival in town?"

"He has indeed shown a preference; but, my dear aunt, he has no right to give way to such a feeling—he has in the most honourable manner been acknowledging—"

"Acknowledging a fiddlestick!" interrupted Mrs. Valacort angrily; "some stuff about that woman, I suppose! Emily, I hope you won't be such an idiot as to imagine an affair of that nature an impediment to honourable wedlock."

"It seems to me of a nature to pre-

clude all chance of happiness in a marriage so cruelly contracted at the expence of another."

"Lord help you, child! if you are never to marry till you meet with a Sir Charles Grandison, that faultless monster! the only attempt even in fiction to draw an immaculate hero, and see the deserved ridicule it has met with!"

Emily hoping to turn off the subject, answered, "Surely, my dear aunt, it is to the conceit and formality of Sir Charles Grandison that the ridicule attaches, and not to his rigid morality."

"Well! well!" impatiently interrupting her; "for pity's sake don't let us enter into a critical dissertation now! keep that for our evening *blues*; what I meant to say, and what I insist upon, is, that if you expect to meet with a man who has never had an affair of gallantry upon his hands, you must seek your lovers among the college quizzes; and even these, upon my life, I should doubt;

but in a man of the world, it's a downright absurdity to expect it, and I can't conceive what could put it into his fool's head to speak to you upon such a subject ; it was the height of indelicacy moreover—I wonder you would listen to him !—For heaven's sake, what did he say ?”

“ Indeed, I can scarcely tell you ; but it seems that an innocent and good young woman has been drawn into error by him —”

“ And by way of making love to you, he comes to tell you this !—I never heard of any thing half so preposterous in my days !—what any other man in the world would have concealed with his utmost care from such a little prude as he must have discovered you to be !”

“ Surely, you are pronouncing the highest encomium on his noble nature, incapable of seeking to owe any thing to concealment !”

“ But where will be the advantage of his noble nature, if, instead of obtaining

him a wife, it foils his wishes ; it would have been a good deal wiser to have proceeded in the common way, and left such discoveries to chance. You might never have happened to hear of it at all—and if you did—when once married there would have been no remedy but to make the best of it.”

“ He paid me the compliment, to think my delicacy might have been wounded by the discovery, to the utter destruction of all confidence in him, and consequently all chance of future happiness.”

“ Then, my dear, he paid you the compliment of taking you for a perfect idiot ; for no woman endowed with common sense would let her happiness be destroyed by a circumstance that had occurred before ever she was acquainted with her husband.”

“ Not if the circumstance were discreditable to his moral character ?—good heavens !”

“ But really, Emily, it is talking almost

like a natural, to say, that in these days it is a reflection upon a young man to have kept a mistress. He will, I dare say, make the handsomest provision for her and for her children—”

“ Her children !—you knew of it then, dear aunt ?”

“ Lord ! to be sure I did.”

“ And never warned me of it, when you saw his particular attentions to me !”

“ Why, what nonsense it would have been ! Could I suppose you such a ninny as to mind it ?”

“ But she was good and innocent till she knew him !”

“ Yes—so I suppose they all are, some time or other.”

“ Be assured, there was something very peculiar in this case !”

“ Well, pray let's hear it then !”

“ I could not bring myself to let him impart the circumstances.”

“ Upon my word and honour, if this

wasn't so very provoking, I could laugh at it as the best joke I ever heard of—here have you discarded one of the first men in England, both in rank and character, because he once kept a mistress under some supposed peculiarity of circumstances—with which you are wholly unacquainted. I vow to heaven, Emily, you are enough to drive one wild, with your rhodomontade nonsense !”—

“ My kind good aunt ! only do have patience with me, till you hear the result of my referring him to my mother !”

“ Referring him to your mother !” she repeated ; “ why, my dear sweet girl, why did you not say so at first—certainly nothing could be better or more proper than a reference to your parent—no fear of her giving way to such folly ! I shouldn't have had another word to say, except that I would rather the compliment had in the first instance been paid to myself—however, I shan't quarrel for trifles—but I

thought you had been such a little wrong-headed simpleton, as to have given a flat refusal."

Emily could make no other answer than a fresh gush of tears, and her aunt sought to make amends for the worry of this conversation, by all the soothings she could devise.

CHAP. IV.

LORD Cranmore, however impatient to set off for the Priory, felt it incumbent upon him to have an interview with the Duke of Ulswater before leaving town. He had already made one or two ineffectual attempts for that purpose, but his Grace had prudently formed a party for an excursion of a few days, in consequence of Lady Sabina's report to him of her brother's lecture, as she called it. Laura having understood that Emily's visit drew towards a close, it was natural to calculate upon Lord Cranmore's removal to his cottage whenever she went away ;

which would leave the duke's assiduities free, and in the meanwhile his absence appeared expedient.

Lord Cranmore now sent a note of inquiry 'when he might be sure of finding the duke at home?' and his servant brought him word that no time was fixed for his return, neither were any orders left where to forward letters to him. The certainty of his absence was some satisfaction, and the visit to the Priory suffered not another instant's delay.

The present inmate of Boxmount Cottage, presented its owner, with an aspect expressive of an exhilaration of spirits, so different from any thing that might ever again have been expected in him, and a heart so overflowing with rapturous admiration of every person and thing belonging to the Villars family, that Lord Cranmore could not but hail it as an auspicious omen for himself.

On the day after his arrival, Mrs. Villars

dispatched a letter to Emily, of which the following was a part.

‘ You never fail, my beloved child, to answer my fondest hopes upon any occasion that calls your principles and your delicacy into action ; nothing can be more strongly marked with both, than your conduct to Lord Cranmore—it has your father’s and my unqualified approbation ; and you will, I trust, reap the full reward of it, in the sanction we give to your encouragement of his lordship’s addresses.

‘ He has with the candour and sincerity so peculiarly his own, informed us of every circumstance respecting his unfortunate connexion, and we can see no claim the unhappy girl is entitled to make upon him. She was clearly and purposefully thrown into his way, notwithstanding the honourable and fixed determination to avoid her, which he formed the moment he became conscious of his preference for her ; and she appears to have been

guided solely by her passion, without the slightest compunction for the total dereliction of every virtuous principle; on no occasion whatever has she hinted the most distant wish or expectation of becoming his wife—to such a person there can be no obligation on his part to sacrifice the honours and interests of his family; neither could the children be rescued in this country by a subsequent marriage from the stigma of their birth, should consideration for them be the plea.

‘ The provision he has made for them and their mother is suitable to the generosity of his nature, and to the affluence of the family.

‘ You will not even have the painful thought of being the cause of their separation. He determined upon it on leaving England, before he was acquainted with you, and has faithfully adhered to the determination. Enjoy therefore, my Emily, without a drawback, the happiness of having obtained by your virtues the

esteem so necessary to ensure the durability of conjugal felicity, and receive Lord Cranmore as the approved lover we should have selected for you, out of a thousand.'

It will be unnecessary to dilate upon the feelings with which Emily read this letter; they may readily be conceived, as well as their effect upon her expressive countenance, when her first emotions had sufficiently subsided to admit of her resorting to Mrs. Valacort's apartment, with the letter in her hand.

"Ah Emily!—I triumph!" was her instantaneous exclamation; "my brother and sister are rational beings, I perceive! no romantic nonsense about them!"

Emily gave her aunt the letter.

"Aye—aye—it's all very well!—I am glad they have hit upon any ground to satisfy your fastidiousness; but I should have thought them great fools, if they had wanted all these fiddle-cum-fads to satisfy themselves."

Emily could not but regret the entire worldliness of her aunt's perceptions, however she felt no disposition just then for entering into argument; and a visitor luckily dropping in, she sat down to the work-table, in silent enjoyment of the most heartfelt happiness.

Of the sensations which at this time filled every bosom at the Priory, it is not easy to give an adequate idea—the period of expected good is, perhaps, that of the most unmixed bliss this life has to bestow—the whole mind is absorbed in it, and raised above the habitual condition of humanity.

Mr. and Mrs. Villars idolized Emily, and saw a prospect opening to her, beyond their most sanguine hopes. Sophia was daily recovering the tone of her energetic mind and fine spirits. Sir Edward Arundel appeared to be making a rapid progress in her esteem, and they judged that a felicity was now in store for her, which they had not again dared

to look for. Agatha's eager affectionate disposition and quick intelligence, her wild enjoyment of every passing pleasure, varied and animated the scene, whilst every succeeding day brought with it the fairest promise to Sophia of her answering to her fondest wish. Aunt Katty was in a paroxysm of delight, bordering upon intoxication, with the matrimonial prospects of her two nieces, which she now deemed as good as completed; Sir Edward Arundel was happiness personified; and Lord Cranmore's countenance was the faithful index of the silent rapture of his soul, in having obtained the concurrence he so dreaded to seek. Could such exquisite sensations be permanent, this world were Paradise, instead of the appointed state of probation we have cause to think it.

The arrival of Patty was still an increase of satisfaction to Mrs. Delmere, as it secured to Agatha the care of one who might thoroughly be confided in, till

the arrival of Mrs. Fitzclare, which had been repeatedly delayed. The letters received from her, breathed gratitude in every line, and at the same time acknowledged the fruitlessness of her researches; but still a vague hope of ultimate success, which she knew not how to forego, continued afloat in her mind, and her departure was protracted from week to week.

The interesting appearance of Patty, as well as her resemblance to Agatha, instantly impressed Sophia in her favour, and she was eager to produce her to Sir Edward Arundel. He started and changed colour at sight of her, and with difficulty suppressed an exclamation of surprize, not only at her likeness to Agatha's mother, which had so forcibly struck Mrs. Valacort, but her still stronger resemblance to another unfortunate, of whose melancholy story he knew but too much. "Strange coincidence indeed! that should now bring *this* girl under *this*

roof!" was the reflection that arose to his mind; and he promised himself to seize the first unobserved opportunity of ascertaining the fate of her wretched parent.

The extraordinary expression of Sir Edward's countenance did not escape the penetrating eye of Sophia; she made no observation upon it however, at the moment, not doubting but he would explain it when occasion offered.

Meanwhile Lord Cranmore had returned to town in the fulness of hope and joy, having only just given time for Mrs. Villars's letter to precede him. Emily's reception in no shape impeached her filial obedience; Mr. and Mrs. Valacort knew not how to make enough of him; and all was happiness and hilarity also in Stanhope Street. Not but it must be confessed that a silent tear would at times stray down the cheek of Emily, as she dwelt upon the sad blot in Lord Cranmore's early conduct. She was sure

he had every extenuation to plead, that such a circumstance could admit of, or her mother would not have exonerated him; but still she had cherished the idea of his moral perfection in her heart's core — and alas! alas! he had fallen short!

The progress of Mrs. Valacort's recovery was extremely slow; confinement and impatience had produced a considerable degree of nervous irritation, and change of air was advised. Emily strongly urged a visit to the Priory, relying much upon the assistance of its inmates in furthering her aunt's mental improvement, as well as upon the salubrious air of the Downs for strengthening her physical powers.

Mrs. Valacort was more than commonly acquiescent, from the desire of contributing by her influence to hurry on the marriage she had so much at heart; and readily gave way to her niece's persuasions: not that she could wholly divest

herself of the apprehension of the dulness that must result from a protracted stay among habits so dissimilar to those she had been accustomed to transplant, together with her tonish associates, from Stanhope Street to the Abbey; where the chief difference between town and country life consisted in the substitution of billiards and morning whist, for shopping and morning visits; but affection for Emily prompted the sacrifice, and she magnanimously set dulness at defiance.

A contrivance was fallen upon for lifting her in and out of the carriage without injury to the broken arm; the ankle not yet admitting of her attempting to rest upon it. Miss Maxwell was prevailed on to join the party; Lord Cranmore attended of course; and the happy set arrived at the Priory, to complete the general satisfaction. Emily was received with that exuberance of joyous feeling which arose from the full persuasion that

her prospect was now as fair as this sub-lunary state can offer. A meeting between Mrs. Villars and her brother had not taken place of some years, and his mild good-humoured agreeable manners made him at all times a desirable guest. Miss Maxwell, with her animated intelligent dark eye—ever-varying countenance, in which good sense and good humour were happily blended—frank manners and affectionate heart, quite answered to the expectations Emily had raised of her; and with these enlivening accessions to the family circle, time stole on unperceived in heartfelt domestic enjoyment, to the astonishment of Mrs. Valacort, whose utmost hopes of escape from the ‘demon *ennui*’ had been limited to the first few days; the unfeigned interest she felt in her husband’s family had satisfied her that those might be well enough got over; and then, as Valacort must be backward and forward on account of parliamentary attendance, she should

get him to make some plausible excuse for wanting her home again, when her *sejour* became very unbearable ; so that when she found herself at the end of a third week before she was well aware that one was gone by, she did not cease to wonder how it could possibly be ! and was at length obliged to confess, that the modes of employing time which she had never yet taken into her account, might help it on as imperceptibly, and *almost* as satisfactorily, as high play and numerous engagements.

Indeed every individual by whom she was surrounded, made it their study to contribute in every way they could devise to her amusement ; even the bustling activity, counsels sage, and happy quotations of Katty, had their share in adding to the London lady's diversion. And a rubber at whist now occasionally found its place among the evening pastimes, though not, indeed, at the rate of French fives, "under which," Mrs. Vala-

cort had at first declared, "there could scarcely be sufficient interest excited to make it worth attending to."

Mrs. Villars had judiciously introduced the proposal as a gratification to her husband; well knowing that if put upon the true footing of seeking to amuse Mrs. Valacort, it would not have been listened to, but she good-humouredly enough acquiesced with a view to please him, provided any of them would sort her cards and deal for her; adding, however, somewhat contemptuously: "What stake? — half crowns? — shillings? — pins? — make no alteration in your country play on my account! — one will interest me just as much as the other!"

"Whist requires such good judgment," Mr. Villars answered, "that like chess, it might almost be played for love. We never deviate from our shillings, and a half crown bet to indulge gamblers," smiling, "but Belmont Park will afford you some

better sport bye and bye than our push-pin concern !”

This was a comfortable hearing ; but again in this instance, Mrs. Valacort was surprized to find the effect of habit, in the rapidity with which she came to be as eager about her shillings and half-crowns, and as contentious for the mode of making or losing the odd trick, as she could have been in the Duchess of Castlehaven’s boudoir.

Sophia was the first person in this happy circle to feel the serenity of her mind something impaired, by the dissimilarity she discovered in her own and Sir Edward Arundel’s ideas of true friendship. In vain had she waited for a solution of the extraordinary effect produced upon him by the first sight of Patty. ‘ Too high spirited to seek a confidence he seemed disposed to withhold, she had brooded over his reserve, till a considerable degree of displeasure was engendered in her breast. “ What ! — was

friendship then with him but a name?— it could be no trivial circumstance that had called up the emotion she had beheld! but confidence must come unsolicited, or it was not worth having!”

The frequent recurrence of thoughts, such as these, had sometimes led her into an inequality of behaviour, so nearly bordering upon caprice, as might have alarmed Sir Edward, could he have seen any thing short of perfection in her; but wholly unconscious of what his countenance had betrayed, he had curbed his impatience for an interview with Patty, that he might not create observation. When, therefore, he found Sophia occasionally substituting dryness or reserve to her natural frankness of manner, he conceived the fault to be in some inadvertent omission on his part; arraigned his own conduct, and redoubled his assiduities—assiduities indeed, of the most captivating sort! unobtrusive, but incessant; ever watchful for what might please, without

apparent study; for there was in Sir Edward Arundel an attraction—a *loveableness* (if I may use such a word) not easily described or resisted. No wonder Sophia's friendship should gradually engross more and more of her thoughts as these qualities unfolded themselves, and that she should become proportionably dissatisfied with what she could only attribute to reserve in him.

Mr. Valacort, ever interested in what pleased his wife, had, in fact, been blinded by his partiality for her, to the heartlessness of the scenes they had of late years been engaged in, and could not avoid, in the excursions he now had occasionally to make, being struck with the comparison of the solicitude testified by their late associates respecting her; with that she excited at the Priory, which was actually contributing so materially to the restoration of her general health.

“Dear Valacort! how glad I am to see you!” exclaimed her grace of Castle-

haven, after having two or three times met him without recollecting the absence of his wife; "we are just wanting a fourth—do cut in, and tell us all about poor dear Mrs. Valacort's leg; and when we shall get her amongst us again? I hear she broke it a second time, in refusing to be lifted out of the carriage."

"Thank you for your kind sympathy, Duchess, her leg has never been broken at all."

"Beg pardon!—her arm I meant—surely we had two by honours!" scoring them,—“made me not think of what I was saying—but you can't imagine how grieved I have been, to think of her being sent into the dreary country at this time of the year."

"My dear duchess, do you recollect this is June?"

"Is it?—Well, but we are in the very height of the winter amusements you know!—but Bailey is such a creature for

country air, he never allows for the counteracting influence of country *ennui* !”

“Faith ! it’s so long since we have led a country life in the country, that we are somewhat surprised to find it rather a good sort of thing.”

“That would be a surprise to me, indeed !” replied her Grace.

“But I believe Belmont Park is in that neighbourhood,” observed Mrs. Waller ; “and there may be some good whist got there to afford a little relief to the daily dulness ; for between ourselves, the Villars’s, though very respectable, and all that—are a little what we should call quizzical !—Lady Laura Belmont made me almost die with laughing, by taking them off t’other day.”

“She’s a charming creature, and a monstrous good mimic !” said the duchess : “by the way ! did you break in that pretty niece of yours to waltzing during her stay ? there never was any

thing so droll as her dismay, at my asking whether she were a waltzer?"

"Upon my soul, if I must speak the truth, I believe she has rather broke us in, to a little more rationality than we were acquainted with, before she came to us."

"Well, heaven bless you with your rationality!" was the reply, "dull work I trow! make the best on't!—but let's mind what we are about now!—four all! a critical moment!"

And there ended the tender concern for 'poor dear Mrs. Valacort.'

CHAP. V.

LORD Cranmore appeared earlier than usual one morning at the breakfast-table, with a cloud upon his brow, and entreated an interview with Emily in the library ; where he put into her hand a letter just received from his father.

With the expression of all the regret at the delay of his son's happiness that an ambitious politician could be expected to feel, the Marquis summoned him to town, to ' become the agent of a secret negotiation on the continent, of the utmost importance, which might take up an indefinite time, though he hoped it

would not exceed a few weeks ; and was sure Lord Cranmore would find full compensation for the protraction of a private engagement, in the honour of being selected for an object of such public importance.'

Public spirit did not, however, happen to be just then the predominant feature of his lordship's mind, and grievously did he deplore the choice his father had with very able political manœuvering, caused to fall upon him. But there was no remedy ; and Emily with her accustomed good sense and disinterestedness urged every argument she could think of to reconcile him to the delay, although her evident emotion sufficiently proved her strong feeling of a separation so unlooked-for, as well as attended with the danger to which the troubles on the continent at that time exposed travellers.

" One consolation he might have in absence," he said, " if she thought her brother could be induced to accompany him to Vi-

enna ; he should then not feel so wholly separated." She had no doubt but Henry would meet the proposal with alacrity.

It should here be mentioned, that Henry Villars had only embraced the profession of the law in obedience to the wish of his parents, his own inclination being entirely for literature and scientific research ; he had, however, pursued the dry study with zeal and considerable credit ; till an occurrence which has not unfrequently staggered the very scrupulous, came across his career ; the necessity of accepting a retaining fee, in a cause of some notoriety, from the party he believed in his heart to be wrong. Finding himself thus compelled to the attempt ' to make the worse appear the better reason ;' and having moreover unluckily succeeded ; he took so unconquerable a dislike to the profession, that his father could not withhold his concurrence to his withdrawing from the bar. And this left him at liberty to com-

ply with Lord Cranmore's wish, which he did with all the pleasure his sister had anticipated.

With a heart somewhat lightened by the unequivocal testimony of her entire affection, the lover parted from the object of his most perfect adoration, and set forward with the speed his filial duty inspired.

Emily's spirits could not immediately recover from such a stroke; Sophia found her greatly depressed—sunk indeed beyond what she herself could very well account for. A sort of superstitious dread seemed to take possession of her; this, however, was so new in Emily, and so unreasonable, she would not give way to it; and quickly agreed to endeavour to shake it off, by going into the air; and Sophia, to direct her thoughts to other objects, proposed a botanical ramble, taking Agatha with them, who was a useful assistant upon such occasions, by

her activity in scrambling after specimens.

“ O! see what a beauty here is!” cried the little girl, showing a flower she had just gathered.

“ That is exactly the *campanula spatula* I have been in search of,” said her aunt; “ but this is a poor specimen, Agg! see if you can’t find a better!”

“ There were a great many better where I got that one I gave aunt Katty t’other day.”

“ How came you to give it to aunt Katty? she don’t care about weeds, as she calls them.”

“ No, but she saw me have it in my hand, and she said she would salt it for your herbal.”

“ Salt it!—what could she mean?—she could’nt say so!”

“ Yes, indeed, but she did; and she said cousin Ned had told her he had been helping you to salt yours.”

“Some play upon aunt Katty’s credulity,” said Emily; “but who is cousin Ned?”

Agatha looked at Sophia, and laughed.

“It’s a name she has thought proper to give to Sir Edward Arundel,” replied Sophia; “and he encourages her in it, and in every sort of liberty she chooses to take with him.”

“Yes—he says he likes me to call him so, because it makes him as if he belonged to the family; but doesn’t he belong to it though?—isn’t he my cousin in good earnest, aunty?”

“To be sure he is!—show us, Agg, where you found more of those campanulas!”

“O! it was up in the corner of that field, where you had such a fright you know.”

“Why, Agatha! you know I positively forbid Patty to take you through that field, on account of the vicious cow.”

“Well then, aunty, indeed Patty

couldn't help it—it was my own fault—I quite forgot you had forbid it!”

“But it was Patty’s business to put you in mind of—”

“O, but Patty was not there, and she called me away as soon as she saw it—so pray don’t be angry with her!”

“But I certainly must be angry, if she separates herself from you, when I rely entirely upon her—”

“Now, indeed, aunty,” again interrupting her, “it was only just for a little, while she was a talking to cousin Ned; and he bid me go on before, because he had something to say to Patty; and so they didn’t mind me, and I kept running after butterflies, and quite forgot about the field.”

Sophia looked at her sister in amazement.

“I dare say he was making some kind inquiries into her situation,” said Emily; “you know we were all so much interested about her in town.”

"He made her cry very much," resumed the little chatterer; "but I don't believe he was cross though; for he looked so good-natured at her!"

"Emily! there is something very unaccountable to me in all this!" said Sophia, in a tone of great emotion.

Emily was surprised at her agitation, for she knew nothing of that first *rencontre* which had so dwelt upon her sister's mind.

"Do these meetings often take place?" she asked precipitately, and wholly thrown off her guard. "I had a better opinion of Patty than—"

"My dear sister!" interrupted Emily, anxious to check what the child might repeat, though no ways displeased with this apparent perturbation; "the meeting must have been purely accidental!—I would answer for Patty's principles and conduct upon any occasion."

"Now dear aunty! pray don't be angry

at Patty ! she is so good, and does love you so."

Sophia, conscious of her imprudence, replied, " I will not be angry at Patty, Agatha, if you have command enough of your tongue not to tell her what you have now betrayed to me."

" O that I have, I am sure!—You shall see now how I can keep a secret, for all cousin Ned didn't think I could neither—but I have though."

" What ! did he bid you keep secret his meetings with Patty ?" again exclaimed Sophia impetuously.

No, he never said nothing about that."

" But I thought, Agatha," said Sophia, again recovering herself, " that you had promised me never to let any body tell you a secret that was to be kept from me."

" So I did, aunty ; and I'm sure I never would let any body in the world tell

me one you mightn't know, except cousin Ned, because he wouldn't tell me to do wrong no more than you—but I shouldn't tell you a story for him neither—so now, don't you never ask me what I have done with that pretty purse you worked for me—that's all!"

Agatha's talent for secret-keeping called up something bordering on a smile in the saddened countenance of Emily, whilst it increased the conscious glow which had overspread that of Sophia. By tacit consent they turned to the objects of their search, though each found much food for silent cogitation in what had been so unintentionally betrayed.

A very few minutes had laid the heart of Sophia more open to her sister than it had hitherto been to herself; but the discovery was treasured up with secret complacency, unwilling to alarm her delicacy, by the premature detection of sentiments so congenial to the wishes of her family.

Sophia, on the contrary, was utterly dismayed to discover the nature of her own feelings — feelings ! from the bare suspicion of which, she would but a few months ago have recoiled with horror. Indeed it was with little less than self-
abhorrence, that she now became sensible she was in danger of a dereliction from the fidelity she considered equally due to Delmere, as if he were still in being. She no sooner, however, convinced herself of what she had to fear, than with her natural impetuous enthusiasm, she determined upon the step she would take.

In the evening, when she had disposed of Agatha to her bed, she sought another interview with her sister ; and immediately entered upon the subject of self-accusation, by recurring to the trifling circumstances the child had brought to light in their walk, “ which had fully opened her eyes,” she said, “ to the danger

into which she was voluntarily rushing."

"Danger of what?" Emily asked.

"Of incurring my own self-aborrence, as well as forfeiting the opinion of all those whose esteem is worth possessing."

"Good heavens! my dear Sophia!—and how?"

"Emily!—I felt a mean unworthy sensation of displeasure at that poor girl Patty, for being an object of concealed interest to Sir Edward Arundel."

"I have no doubt but one word from you to herself would obtain an elucidation that would entirely set your mind at rest."

"I should despise myself for taking an underhand mode of coming at what my friend sees fit to withhold."

"Then frankly apply to himself."

"And betray an interest beyond what friendship can sanction?"

"Do you think that discovery would be very distressing to him?"

“ It ought to sink me below his contempt !”

“ You do not mean, Sophia, that Sir Edward Arundel’s sentiments for you can be mistaken ?”

“ I mean, that had he not vowed to confine them to the limits of the purest friendship, he had never attained the footing of confidence we are now upon.”

“ But what should preclude his forming the hope that a more tender feeling might in time arise out of it on both sides ?”

“ My faith to the memory of Delmere,” answered Sophia solemnly, “ which I stand pledged to carry inviolate to the grave.”

“ Could Delmere exact so unreasonable a promise ?”

“ What might in any other have been unreasonable, could not be deemed so in him. We were each other’s first, and only love ; and if fate had robbed him of *me*, his affections had been buried with

me—he has sworn it a thousand and a thousand times.—How then could I ever forgive myself, were I to suffer mine to be drawn aside from him?”

“ I think, dearest Sophia, your enthusiastic mind is creating distresses for yourself and others. I never can believe that, had Delmere survived you, he would have condemned himself to a life of celibacy.”

Sophia was perfectly indignant at her sister's doubts of her husband's truth; acknowledged, that she was now made excessively unhappy, by detecting in herself a change towards Sir Edward highly injurious to her plighted faith, and said, she was firmly resolved upon breaking off all intercourse with him, as her only security.

“ But upon what plea?” Emily asked.

“ Upon the fair and candid one of having discovered that we are both becoming the victims of self-delusion.”

“ For pity's sake, consider well what

you are about, Sophia!—do consult with my mother before taking so rash a step!—do recollect the state this unhappy man was in when you became acquainted with him!—do not, from a principle of false delicacy, risk driving him now to perhaps worse—”

“False delicacy!” interrupting her, “and this from you, Emily!—but it is in vain to argue against prejudice. I must be guided by what I feel to be right, whatever misery be the consequence.”

“Dearest sister! will you at least promise me not to be so precipitate? do give more time to the consideration!—indeed you are not at present sufficiently dispassionate to give the argument its due weight!—there is a bias of displeasure in your mind on account of Patty. Will you at least let him explain that matter to you before you take any decisive step?”

With much difficulty and length of persuasion, this concession was finally

obtained; and Emily rested satisfied in the hope the explanation would draw on others, that might reconcile Sophia to herself: for her opinion of Delmere differed widely from that of her sister, and she had little doubt of Sir Edward's being acquainted with circumstances calculated to set the matter in a far other light.

To move Sophia from her determinations was not of easy accomplishment at any time, and she remained firmly bent upon her purpose; but she had conceded to seeking the explanation, more with a view to reinstating Patty in her own good opinion, than from any consideration respecting Sir Edward. So she believed at least; for the innocent simplicity and integrity of the good girl had created a strong interest for her with her mistress, who had really been pained on *her* account with the doubtful aspect of the business, as well as from the other motives that had not so clearly manifested

themselves till brought to light by Agatha.

It was not long ere the opportunity offered of entering upon the subject with Sir Edward ; but a slight circumstance preceded it, which somewhat disqualified Sophia from treating the discussion with all the moderation she intended.

She had inquired for Patty with a view to sending Agatha out of the way with her, and was informed she was not within ; upon which she took Agatha to a bower in the garden, meaning to set her about a little gardening task that should detain her long enough to give time for the explanation she sought. As they approached the bower, Patty appeared at a distance, coming along the path from the village ; but she turned out of it through a gap in the hedge to get by a back way into the house, looking anxiously round as if fearful of being seen ; and soon after, Sir Edward followed from the village also.

Thrown entirely off her guard by this suspicious occurrence, she hastily dismissed Agatha to the house, and going into the bower, awaited his approach with all the composure she could assume; but assuredly the expression of her countenance betrayed 'all was not well within.'

Sir Edward came up with the animated look of pleasure the sight of her always produced in him, and began expressing his satisfaction—but stopped short on observing her cold manner, and with a look of alarm, said, "Something disturbs you!"

"I cannot deny but something does indeed," was the reply.

He waited to hear more; but finding her continue silent, he resumed, "May I not know?—will you not impart to me what has occurred?"

"Your conscience, Sir Edward, could save me that trouble, I presume."

"Have *I* incurred your displeasure?"

Astonished, confounded, yet gratified almost beyond the power of concealment, to detect the working of feelings so much more consonant to his wishes than he had yet dared to flatter himself with having inspired, he fell at her feet in the most extreme emotion. “Dearest!—most beloved of—*friends!*” checking himself from the instantaneous recollection of the consequences to be expected from making her sensible of what she was betraying; “how eagerly would I shed my blood to save a tear of yours from falling! but here—’tis the severe dictates of honour that seal my lips. Heaven only knows how severe! but credit my word, which never yet gave sanction to deceit, Patty is pure as innocence; and of principle so strict, that none better could be selected for the trust reposed in her.”

His passionate action had, however, flashed the conviction upon the mind of Sophia, that she had betrayed herself; and nearly phrenzied with the thought,

she clasped her hands in wild agony, exclaiming, "Enough, Sir Edward! enough!—Spirit of my departed Delmere! forgive!—oh forgive! I will redeem this moment of degradation!—I here renew my vow of inviolable faith!" Rising to go, she added with recovered dignity, "Follow me not, Sir Edward!—I fully absolve Patty, on the strength of your assertion. *And here we part.*"

So saying, she left him, as he bowed submissive to her will; but little aware of her full meaning in the words she had last uttered.

Severe indeed! beyond any thing she could suppose, was this trial of his fortitude. One little word would have dispelled the delusion under which Sophia acted, and secured him that, for which alone he wished to live; but the sacredness of confidential friendship, though the grave had now closed upon it, could not consistently with his principles of honour and delicacy be set aside. It was

no slight consolation, however, that he derived from the conviction that he was beloved—and what might he not now hope from time!—

Meanwhile the self-condemned Sophia had separated from him in no enviable state of mind. Shocked beyond measure at the mean jealousy she was conscious of having betrayed, instead of the candid dignified step she had proposed to herself to take;—lowered as she conceived in the eyes of him whose esteem she prized above all earthly blessings, and degraded in her own, by the discovery of having deviated so much farther from her plighted faith, than she could have suspected herself capable of;—she formed the instantaneous resolution of following up her parting words by the positive interdiction of all farther intercourse, and a recurrence to the compact that had sealed their friendship.

CHAP. VI.

SIR Edward Arundel's agitated ruminations had led him to wander away for a considerable length of time, when he was finally met by Katty.

"Bless us all, Sir Edward!" she began, "where can you have been straying? I've been hunting for you all the world over! here's a letter for you slipped by mistake among my brother's—I thought myself sure of finding you at the cottage—but they told me you had been gone ever so long; and there was my poor niece with eyes so red—and cheeks so pale—I hope to goodness *you* are not going to leave us too!"

“ My dear Mrs. Katharine ! what a flattering suggestion !” was the delighted reply, quite thrown off his guard by the unexpected coincidence with the train of his own thoughts.

“ Suggestion ? dear heart ! I didn’t intend to suggest any thing. I vow and protest I have no more meaning in any thing I say, than the child unborn ; for I wanted to talk to you about something quite different ; only do but conceive what a scrape you have got me into !”

“ Have I indeed ? then pray command my best exertions to help you out of it —what is it ?”

“ You told me, you know, about my niece Delmere’s salting her plants.”

“ Not that I can recollect, upon my word !”

“ But you certainly did though !—aye, and I see by your smile you are conscious of it too.” He smiled at the recollection of having said he had assisted in *sorting* the specimens for Sophia’s herbal.

“ Well ! so when little Agg brought in a weed of some sort or other, which she said her aunt wanted ; I bid her give it me, wishing to surprise my niece agreeably with it ready salted to her hand, and I laid it as straight and as even as ever I could—and sprinkled it well all over, and popped it in between Malthus’s Popularity and Darwin’s—something, I forget what—upon my brother’s library table ; nice heavy books, to flatten it, you know, as I’ve seen her do—and what do you think ? only conceive my fright, when I saw something wet this morning all over the table ! and if you’ll believe me, there were the books all in such a pickle ! stained in such a shocking manner ! leaves and binding !—and the weed looking all rotten as it were. I declare you might have knocked me down with a feather—my brother will be in such a taking ! ”—

Sir Edward could not altogether command his countenance during this speech, but seeing her look somewhat offended at

the levity with which he seemed to be treating her distress, he quickly recovered his gravity, and told her, "The accident fell out so luckily for him, he could not help enjoying the mistake, as he had long been intending to read both the books, and might have gone on neglecting to get them; but if she would purloin them from Mr. Villars's table, they should be immediately replaced by those he meant to order, and would not read at all the worse for their stains."

"Good gracious me! that is so very good-natured, and so very like yourself Sir Edward Arundel, and I can't possibly have any scruple about being obliged to you, who may so soon, for any thing I know, be ——— but mum for that! only I must just say that from the very first hour of our acquaintance, sir, you have had my very best wishes for success——that's all."

And for that *all* Sir Edward was ready to hug her to his heart; so they separated

in great mutual kindness ; and poor Katty was relieved from the dread of her brother's displeasure, which was apt to run high where books were concerned.

Sir Edward held the letter un-opened in his hand ; it was from Rock Castle, and could not, he thought, be of much moment. His mind was wholly intent on Katty's suggestions ; and he was tempted to doubt whether he had hitherto been quite fair, in his appreciation of her mental powers. Assuredly she seemed in this instance to have had penetration to discover his sentiments before he had even detected them in himself, for she said, ' From the first she had wished him success.' Kind soul!—and honest!—there certainly was sometimes an acuteness upon particular subjects in women who did not in general seem bright, that was surprising ! the same quickness of perception might have laid open Mrs. Delmere's feelings to her likewise—rapturous thought!—

It is amusing and not unuseful to remark how susceptible the judgment is, even of the wise ones of the earth, of receiving a bias from what flatters their wish. Good Katty—bless her! had gone no deeper into the real state of the case on this occasion, than on most others that fell within her cognisance; she harboured a notion—for it would be a strange abuse of terms to apply the word opinion to any of her crude conceptions—but she harboured a *notion* that a disengaged man could not be thrown in the way of a disengaged woman, without an engagement between them becoming the necessary result; and Sir Edward Arundel proving besides both rich and agreeable, her fervent wishes had converted the matter with regard to them into absolute certainty, long before either of the parties concerned was in the smallest degree conscious of receding from the mutual reluctance with which they had first met; for assuredly there could not well be a

more unpromising illustration of Katty's hypothesis than they originally offered. Sir Edward, now, however, went on, revolving the various innuendos that had at times dropt from her, till he satisfied himself that she actually was a person of considerable observation, and entitled to have her friendship cultivated from better feelings than those she had thus far excited.

Whether he very fairly investigated the motives that prompted his seeking this greater intimacy is not quite so certain, as it is, that the happiest forebodings and anticipations had acquired full possession of his mind, when he finally recollected to open his letter.

Its contents were of deeper interest than he had foreseen ; it informed him of his uncle's being dangerously ill, in the West of England, and urged him to lose no time in going to him. This admitted not of a moment's hesitation. His tie indeed to Mr. Arundel was simply that, of consan-

guinity; no similarity of character or disposition endeared them to each other; no sympathy existed between them; but Mr. Arundel was at a distance from home, surrounded only by menials, and Sir Edward knew of what importance different care might be. He ordered his chaise, therefore, without delay; and stepping only to inform Sophia by a note, of the cause of his sudden departure, he set forth with feelings sadly checked from their late elation by this vexatious event.

Meanwhile, Sophia was employing herself in writing and destroying letter after letter, before she could at all feel satisfied with the expression of her sentiments. Having at length, however, accomplished the difficult task, she dispatched it to Boxmount Cottage, without any previous reference to Emily, whose opposition she was desirous to escape; and then shutting herself up in her room, forbade all intrusion of letters or messages whatever;

and gave herself up to the most unqualified misery. By these means she remained ignorant till the following day of Sir Edward's departure.

Mr. Arundel had been very ill, but his disorder was already on the turn when his nephew arrived, and promised such rapid recovery, as to give Sir Edward every reason to hope he should not be long detained from pursuing his heart's dearest interests—and he was again giving a loose to those flattering anticipations that had so recently brightened his prospect, when the sight of Mrs. Delmore's handwriting on the superscription of a letter blessed his eyes! addressed to himself!—could it be?—He kissed the fair characters in a transport of exultation—and read as follows :

• Mortified—humbled—sunk in my own eyes beyond all endurance—I call upon you, Sir Edward, to recollect the terms of our friendly compact—and leave me.

‘ I look impatiently to the only atonement I can make for feelings so unworthy of all I have ever professed to be. Absence—a long continued uninterrupted absence, may restore me to some portion of the self-esteem I have forfeited.

‘ I attempt not to dissemble or disguise the sentiments that have betrayed themselves—and oh! how degradingly! You saw the workings of mean jealousy, and with the delicacy peculiar to yourself, would have saved me from discovering that you did so; but I could not be deceived—I have lost even the poor merit of dignified sincerity, with which I had predetermined to have come forward and candidly said—
‘ My friend, ’tis time we part’ (for I had detected a sufficient change in myself to convince me there was cause to do so, though far from conscious how much cause!) I had then at least, by such consistent frankness, saved myself from being lowered in your esteem: but now!—
You who know what I owe to the memory

of him that is gone!—You to whom I have acknowledged the reciprocal inviolable vow that binds us!—for never was faith like his to me, his earliest only love! what must you deem of me! oh, not half so despicably as I do of myself!

‘ But enough of this disgraceful weakness, which I have not sought to palliate, that you might clearly see my simple openheartedness, and derive this conviction from it, that I speak with the same spirit of sincerity, in declaring my unalterable resolution of breaking off all intercourse.

‘ I feel the wound I am inflicting—and it is not the least trying part of the step I now take; but where honour compels there can be no appeal! Neither can I allow you to make any to my family; their interference could be of no avail; none can judge of the peculiar situation in which I am placed but myself—and *you* Sir Edward, who must be conscious from your knowledge (earlier even than mine)

of the purity and truth of him whose remembrance I cherish ; you well understand the obligation laid upon me by the affections of a heart which loved me entirely, and never knew love but for me. Your long-tried generous friendship for him will best reconcile you to the sacrifice we are now called upon to make ; it must be perfect as his deserts. Here then ceases all correspondence between us. Whatever may relate to Agatha, may pass through the channel of my brother ; I could not bear that my inconsiderate folly should rob the dear child of the invaluable benefit of your advice, and protection.

‘ In mitigation of the pain this letter will give you, I beg you to reflect upon the very high opinion that could alone prompt the courage to write it. Your esteem is absolutely necessary to the recovery of my peace of mind ; and your *entire acquiescence* in the contents of this, shall consider as the *proof* of my not

having wholly forfeited it. I can admit of no answer.

‘Farewell!—a long farewell!—my far too highly valued friend!

‘SOPHIA DELMERE.’

Sir Edward remained for hours as one petrified, holding the fatal letter in his hand, that so irrevocably crushed the fondly cherished hopes so lately sprung up in his soul; for too well did he know Sophia, to look for any mitigation of the sentence here passed.—His misery rendered still more poignant by the cruel appeal to his own conviction of what he knew to be a delusion, which he could not allow himself to dispel.

Dreadfully severe was now the conflict, as on the repeated perusals of this trying letter, he for a moment hugged the delightful certainty of being beloved to his breast; his whole mind softened by the consciousness that one word!—one little word! might make her his! and what could now be the injury to him who

was gone?—but all his better feelings as instantly recurred to check this train of thought, and plunge him back into hopeless despondency.

To this most flagrant of Colonel Delmere's immoralities, the seduction of Patty's mother, Sir Edward had only become privy from accidental circumstances, and he had ineffectually exerted all the influence of friendship to avert the evil; a friendship not founded on similarity of principle assuredly, but fostered by gratitude, for Delmere's having exposed himself to imminent hazard to save Sir Edward's life, upon some military occasion. Delmere was esteemed as an officer, and honourable in all transactions with men; and Sir Edward devoted to the duties of his profession whilst in the army, and wholly free from libertine pursuits himself, was not acquainted with the whole extent of his friend's lax principles, or it might have slackened their friendly intercourse, and weakened the tie he

held so sacred ; for to that sacredness his mind ever again forcibly reverted, and the most unqualified wretchedness by degrees took possession of him.

Day after day passed on, ere he could bring his thoughts into any settled state. Finally, however, there seemed no alternative from implicit submission to her will ; and the Peninsula once more offered the best resource. He might there find a termination of his sufferings, that should still enhance the esteem of Sophia, and endear his memory—or he might—for there was an occasional buoyancy in his mind, excited by the assurance of her affection—he might find an opportunity there, of so distinguishing himself as to give him an irresistible hold upon her enthusiastic admiration of heroism.

Mr. Arundel's recovery soon set him at liberty to follow this plan, and he restrained himself to the addressing a valedictory letter to Mrs. Villars, in which he requested her to impart his determination

to Mrs. Delmere, 'trusting,' he said, 'that she would accept of his implicit obedience as the most convincing proof that his existence was devoted to her will.'

And in a very few days more, he was on his way to volunteer his services to Lord W——.

The surprise and regret with which Mrs. Villars received Sir Edward's letter, may readily be imagined; for to Emily alone had Sophia acknowledged what she had done, and under an injunction of such strict secrecy, that poor Emily could only grieve at what was not to be remedied. Nor did the account which Sophia candidly gave her mother, when called upon to explain, in any degree soften the vexation. Cut to the heart at this closing of so fair a prospect, Mrs. Villars endeavoured, at the risk of wounding her feelings, to convince her of the delusion under which she was throwing from her every chance of future comfort; but having only to adduce the general opi-

nion of the world respecting Colonel Delmere's moral character, she could specify no particulars; and for the world's opinion Sophia had very little respect; so nothing was gained by the argument.

The anxiety of Mrs. Villars was still increased by the step Sir Edward had taken; indeed, *there* her daughter was obliged to confess he had somewhat outstript her intentions; highly as she prized valour, she was not without 'compunctious visitings,' for having driven him once more into the field of danger, who had in earlier youth acquired sufficient renown in Egypt to satisfy even her heroic expectations: and however she strove to convince herself that his implicit obedience to her dictates was exactly what she looked for; and however she extolled it to her sister; such a restless disquietude now took possession of her, as entirely threw her out of all her habitual occupations. Agatha's instruction became an irksome task; her

impatience for the arrival of Mrs. Fitzclare exceeded all bounds ; the most unreasonable irritability betrayed itself upon this, and every occasion ; she could scarcely allow for the validity of the poor woman's plea for again deferring her departure, which was the critical state of Mrs. Carstairs ; whose last alarming seizure continued of such doubtful issue, that she could not be left till there was a change in one way or other.

How differently did the days now pass at the Priory, from those so lately marked by the brightest expectations !

Mrs. Valacort had left it in displeasure, little short of a downright quarrel, with Sophia ; it was not to be expected that she, who could not enter into the 'fastidiousness' of Emily, should make allowance for these loftier flights ; and she had so far influenced the sentiments both of Mr. and Mrs. Villars, that they wore an appearance of dryness very new from parents hitherto so indulgent ; which,

however, far from producing the intended effect of bringing their daughter to recal her unadvised mandate, only operated to make her confine herself more to her cottage, where solitude did not much contribute either to soften or moderate her feelings.

Miss Maxwell protracted her stay in the hope her friendly offices might be of use; but in vain did she exert her enlivening powers to restore any thing like cheerfulness to the family circle; the gloom even reached aunt Katty's vacant mind, of late so satisfactorily filled with plans of bridal paraphernalia, that now she seemed not to have an idea left, and was ready to fight with the wind, for want of an object on which to bestow her activity; and but for an occasional sprightly frisk of Agatha's, this little circle might have been mistaken for a Quakers' meeting where the spirit withheld its influence.

CHAP. VII.

WEEKS—months passed on in slow and cheerless succession; varied by little more of interest or incident, than what arose from the daily arrival of newspapers of every description, which Sophia now eagerly accumulated, in compensation of the epistolary intercourse she had so rashly prohibited. A glimpse of the postman as he first entered the grounds might be caught from her dressing-room-window, and the breakfast table was ordered to be placed before it—his steps were followed in imagination, till he again emerged from behind the hawthorn hedge, and wond'rous dilatory they most commonly seemed! The

day passed in reading and comparing the military dispatches, reports, statements, conjectures ; the evening, in seeking her father's opinion of the probable results ; who unfortunately had not the same turn for military operations, as for political economy, so that no great increase of satisfaction was obtained by the discussion. Thus, however, did the six days go round, till *blank Monday* again brought an accession of ten-fold gloom.

Vain were Emily's gentle soothings to calm the perturbation of her sister's mind ; relieving her of the task of Agatha's lessons was all that could be done, until the arrival of Mrs. Fitzclare might assist in giving a turn to it ; but this continued to be retarded by Mrs. Carstairs' fluctuating state.

Poor Emily !—she too experienced the sickening influence of 'hope deferred.'

LordCranmore's letters breathed all that the tenderest purest affection could inspire ; but the unforeseen delays in

diplomatic negociation, still kept him hanging on, and of course unhappy.

An event at length occurred which worked a very unexpected change in the face of affairs.

Mary Benson, Patty's mother, had come to light. Miss Maxwell received the news from Lady Sarah. The poor woman had been absent from her cottage when it took fire; on her return she found it in ashes, and could obtain no intelligence of her daughter, farther than her having been seen by the neighbours, after the flames had burst out; she had sought her in the first instance at Lady Sarah Maxwell's, and thence been sent in various directions by one and another, who had had a glimpse of Patty, till she had at length wandered away many miles from home, and sunk down by the road-side overpowered with fatigue and distress of mind. Here she had been found by a humane cottager, who had taken her in and nursed her, for she had become very ill,

and continued so a considerable time. On recovering some degree of strength, she knew not what better to turn herself to, than taking a share in the daily labours of those who had rescued her, and carry her earnings to the common stock. As she was one day picking stones in a field, a farmer from her own neighbourhood chanced to pass, and recognize her. He asked whether Patty were again gone? and upon her answering she had never seen Patty since; he informed her of the advertisement he had read in the newspaper, with so little caution, that the sudden revulsion occasioned a relapse, and again disabled her for a time from setting out in quest of her daughter. The moment she was sufficiently recovered, she made the best of her way to Lady Sarah's, where she was informed of every particular; ending with the satisfactory assurance of her child's being now in perfect comfort and safety under

the protection of the widow of a Colonel Delmere.

Mary started at the name—then clasping her hands, she wildly exclaimed, “O! it’s the hand of providence!—it’s the hand of providence alone could have guided her there!”

This was so emphatically repeated, as to excite the curiosity of Lady Sarah, who, by dint of persuasive kindness, at length obtained from the unfortunate woman the secret of her life, in the acknowledgment of her youthful error. Her father was one of that class of men now nearly extinct in the country—a respectable English yeoman. Upon his discovering where Colonel Delmere had placed her, he had forcibly taken her away in his absence, and carried her to a distant country, where he had caused her to change her name; but where, after the birth of her child, the sense of her dishonour had broken his heart. This

stroke had completed the misery which her consciousness of misconduct had before made sufficiently acute, for by no common arts could she have been led astray ; and, as Patty had intimated, she had voluntarily devoted her days to hard labour and penitence, and her morning and evening prayer had been, that her poor girl might escape the snares of designing men.

She ended her narrative with expressing the hopes she had entertained, before the occurrence of this last misfortune, that a very deserving young man was about to make Patty his wife.

When Lady Sarah informed her there was too much reason to doubt his having such honest intentions, the poor creature fell upon her knees, exclaiming, "O blessed ! blessed be God then, again and again ! for having saved her and thrown her into such protection !—O my lady ! use your interest with Mrs. Delmere, never to lose sight of her !—She is her husband's own child !—indeed she is !—

you see I have been no better able to judge for her than for myself.—Let her but be kept good and virtuous ! though I should never again set eyes on her, I shall bless God for evermore !”

Lady Sarah answered for the protection that would be given her ; and cautioning the mother against any unguardedness in betraying her daughter’s residence to George, should he artfully attempt the discovery, she gave her hopes of being allowed to see her—and immediately proceeded to make the communication to Miss Maxwell, who, without a moment’s delay imparted it to Emily.

The hand of providence did, indeed, seem extended to more than one object in this interesting disclosure, Emily thought ; but far more diffident of her own judgment, though with far more reason to confide in it, than Sophia, she immediately resorted to her mother with the letter.

Mrs. Villars, thus armed with what she

considered as incontrovertible facts, proceeded to the cottage with a feeling of happiness which had for some time past been a stranger to her bosom.

The news of Patty's mother being found, caused a momentary gleam of pleasure to play over the languid countenance of Sophia; but as the subsequent communication was made, the unwonted expression disappeared, and she declared her entire disbelief of the whole tale; and accused the woman of inventing it in consequence of having by some chance heard of the casual resemblance in Patty to Agatha.

"You Sophia! suspicious and uncharitable in the same breath! how unlike yourself!" cried Mrs. Villars.

"Every attempt to stigmatise Delmere will find me inaccessible—"

"To proof?" interrupted Mrs. Villars.

"Where is the proof? this is bare assertion."

"I conceive some proof may be ad-

duced from Lady Sarah Maxwell's opinion of the woman, whose good conduct she has known for years. I conceive an addition to it, to arise from the world's estimation of Colonel Delmere's character, so very wide of the purity you attribute to him ; above all, I conceive the unaccounted-for interest in Patty, betrayed by Sir Edward Arundel—"

" Gracious heaven ! my mother !" interrupted Sophia, a ray of light now seeming to dart at once upon her heart, " Gracious heaven ! could it be possible that—let us send for Patty !—but no—it shall not be from her that I will learn any thing—I will not forfeit his reliance on my generosity to her !—let us send for the mother—I will examine *her*. But Patty herself !—for mercy's sake ! can Patty be capable of so much duplicity ?"

" She may be ignorant, Sophia—it is very probable she is ; of that we shall know more ere long ; for the present, I must desire Emily to break to her the

news of her mother's being found, and Miss Maxwell will write, to request of Lady Sarah to send down Mary Benson, without loss of time."

The disturbance and distraction of Sophia's mind now rose to such a height, it was quite impossible she could subdue herself so as at this moment to bear the sight of Patty, whose joy, however extreme, brought on no alarming paroxysm; indeed, the gentle gradual course Emily had taken in making the discovery to her, was quite calculated to avert any such fear. She expressed the utmost eagerness to be immediately allowed to go to her mother; and when she had the additional happiness of hearing that her mother had been sent for to come to her, the excess of her gratitude for such an indulgence, made it very difficult to restrain her from rushing into her lady's presence—she scarce could be made to hear reason.

Having, however, at length been led

to comprehend that it was on Sophia's account she was prohibited, who having received some agitating news must not be disturbed, she gave way ; and the following morning Mrs. Villars contrived a pleasurable excursion for the day, for Agatha and Patty ; and when they returned to the cottage in the evening, Sophia was at the Priory.

The next morning brought poor Mary Benson to the arms of her daughter.

Sufficient time having been given for their mutual feelings to be somewhat tranquilized, and indeed for Sophia herself to obtain some degree of composure for the agitating interview, Mary Benson was admitted into her presence.

The poor woman, pale—breathless—trembling—wholly unable to articulate a syllable, threw herself at her feet, and burst into an agony of tears ; her tears were of gratitude, but the sense of her own degradation sunk her to the earth.

There is a character in truth, not easily

mistaken !—the appearance of the woman instantly dispersed Sophia's doubts, but she could not soon command herself so as to speak.

Raising her however, and motioning for her to sit down, she would have said something encouraging, but the poor conscious woman drawing back, cried, “ Oh no, madam !—oh no !—not before *you* can I sit !—too well do I know my own unworthiness ! but my poor child is innocent and good, if you will but be pleased to continue your protection to her !”

Sophia now, with an effort, found voice to assure her she would ; and by degrees recovered composure sufficient to inquire into the disgraceful truth.

Mary, whose object was now to make perfectly clear that, which she had devoted herself to a life of drudgery to conceal, gave an account at once so artless and so distinct of every circumstance, that it was impossible to withhold

belief from any thing she related ; and the unwarrantable and cruel means of seduction that had been employed, evinced a depravity in such strong contrast with the opinion of her idol which Sophia had thus far been deluded into cherishing, that it seemed almost to unsettle her understanding ; and when, in corroboration of her statements, Mary produced a packet of letters in Delmere's own handwriting, she exclaimed, " Enough!—enough!—for pity's sake have done—or you will drive me mad—"

Mary stood aghast—and lost all power of motion, as well as of articulation, in the dread of having offended.

Sophia perceiving her to stand as if petrified, recovered sufficient composure to say, " Be assured I will provide for you both—but go to your daughter ; you have dreadfully disordered me !"

" Pray, madam, forgive me !" again falling on her knees ; " for mercy's sake forgive me !—it was my child's eternal

welfare only, could have given me courage to utter it—”

“ I do forgive you !—I am not angry—only leave me now !” cried Sophia.

Mary arose to go ; as she was leaving the room, Sophia stopping her, eagerly said, “ Tell me, upon your veracity, what does your daughter know of what you have now told me ?”

“ Nothing, madam !—nothing, upon my sacred word ! not for worlds would I have let her know her mother’s disgrace.”

“ Then, on your life, say not a word to Patty of what you have now told me !”

“ Depend upon me, madam, for telling her nothing without your leave.” And Mary quitted the room, leaving Sophia in a state of perturbation not quickly to be tranquilized.

To discover in the man, whose immaculate purity had been the day dream of her romantic fancy, a systematic proflig

gate! to have been the dupe of his hypocritical morality! to have been 'fooled' by him to the top of her bent,' with the idea of being his first and only love! her pride and her delicacy were equally offended. Then the contrast rushed into her mind, of Sir Edward Arundel's inflexible integrity! conscious as she had become, of her entire power over him, what words can express her sense of the strict honour that could keep him silent when one word might have secured her his! and now to reflect that her obstinate adherence to her own single opinion in defiance of the world, should have caused her to sacrifice both his happiness and her own!—that her precipitate folly should have driven him into scenes of danger, from which he might not, with credit, be able to withdraw!—all this together, actually worked her uncontrollable imagination into a high fever; and many days elapsed before the joint efforts of Mrs. Villars and

Emily could restore her to any power of thought or action.

As she by degrees became more composed, it required no great strength of argument on her mother's part, to satisfy her that the sacredness of her vow rested upon its reciprocity—she never had considered it in any other light she no longer reproached herself, for her just estimation of Sir Edward Arundel's merit, and gave up her whole heart and mind to the contemplation of it; but how wretched did she now feel, in the dread that the disappointment which had impelled him to volunteer his services, might also cause him to expose himself more rashly to danger, than the occasion called for.

She, however, hesitated to take the step her natural frankness would have prompted, till an account in the newspapers of an intended attack of more than common hazard, left but one idea in her mind; that of endeavouring to

draw Sir Edward from the danger, by a fair exposure of the change in her sentiments, which had resulted from the discovery she had made—and her letter she hoped might reach in time by the aid-de-camp who had brought the dispatches, and was immediately to return.

With her habitual impetuosity she seized her pen—but widely different was the present task from any of the foregoing! She began over and over again—she could not satisfy herself. Delicacy—true feminine delicacy now stood in the way of frankness. On the former occasions—in the case of Lord Leonard Ormsby it was generosity—in the case of Sir Edward it had been integrity, that urged her on to such uncommon proceedings; but here!—to invite a lover back!—she could not do it—and she disdained to have recourse to subterfuge of any kind!—throwing down her pen in an agony, she resorted to her mother.

Highly gratified with the task, Mrs.

Villars found no difficulty in making the fair statement.

The discovery of Mary Benson had placed the forbearance of Sir Edward in so strong a light had so changed Mrs. Delmere's opinion of her husband's claims upon her sentiments—and so deepened her regret at the dangers to which her precipitancy had exposed him, that she looked anxiously for the speedy and safe return which might afford her the means of atoning for the inconsistency and caprice of her former treatment.

And this letter reached its destination on the very eve of the battle.

Meanwhile, the sight of Patty was so very agitating to Sophia, that Mrs. Villars proposed the sending her with her mother into a respectable lodging at Andover, where they might at leisure look round for a situation that would suit them—they were sufficiently qualified to carry on some little haberdashery business—and the Villars family all con-

curred in the wish of contributing to supply the means.

Mary Benson's good opinion of George, had not entirely given way to Lady Sarah Maxwell's reprobation of him, as that was only founded on suspicion; for Patty had always held back from specifying his misconduct. Now therefore, she could not resist expressing a hope that he might be able to justify himself. "Never!—never, mother!" exclaimed the agitated girl: "You shall be the judge yourself; I never could have revealed his baseness to any other."

The narrative may be given in fewer words than poor Patty employed in it, whose sufferings were too painfully recalled to her mind to proceed very coherently.

As she was returning at rather a late hour, from a farm whither her mother had sent her, she met George in a bye lane—she was immediately sensible from his manner, that he was flushed with

liquor ; and upon his offering her some rudeness, she had mildly expostulated with him, hoping by gentleness to calm him ; but his conversation becoming more improper, she asked him, how he could think of wounding the ears of one he meant to make his wife, with such shocking talk—upon which, he burst into a violent laugh, and told her, marriage was a very good thing to talk about ; but they might set him down a fool, who caught him in that noose ; and his behaviour became so brutal, that fright gave her strength to push him from her, and by his reeling and staggering back she had escaped past him, and ran on faster than in his present condition he could follow. On reaching the cottage, and not finding her mother below, she had lighted her candle, supposing her in bed, and gone up stairs to seek her protection—not finding her there, however, fear again took possession of her, at the thoughts of being alone if George had followed, and

in her terror she left the candle ; making her way out at the back of the cottage to a neighbour's hovel close by—here she waited till a cry of fire alarmed her, and then rushing forth with the other cottagers, she saw the flames breaking forth from her own dwelling, and losing all recollection in the various horrors that now assailed her, she took the fancy that she had burnt her mother in her bed ; and flew off she knew not whither. Having wandered about the remainder of the night without knowing where she was, she had at length from lassitude sunk down under a hedge in a field, and remained in a state of stupefaction for some hours. Upon recovering the power of motion, she again set forth, and found herself in Hyde Park, just when the crowd was at its height. Seeing so many people together, the idea struck her bewildered mind, that George might be amongst them—and she plunged into the water to escape him.

When Patty had concluded her recital, her mother hugged her to her heart, for her virtuous determination against ever again holding intercourse with the worthless fellow.

Patty now also informed her mother of Sir Edward Arundel's interest in her fate, and repeated inquiries after various circumstances, of which she had not been able to give him any account; he had assured her, that whenever her mother should be found, he would provide for her future comforts. Mary Benson could not understand what should lead a perfect stranger to show any concern about her, for she had never known of his ineffectual efforts to rescue her from Delmere's pursuit—any more than of the provision he had finally obtained of him, to make for her and her infant, whenever he might be able to discover them; to which Sir Edward, however, had not been able to obtain any clue till the unexpected appearance of Patty at the cottage, when

the coincidence of her likeness and her age had so forcibly struck him. Mary, rendered suspicious by unhappy experience, carefully questioned her daughter respecting the stranger's manner to her, but received perfect satisfaction as to the delicacy and propriety with which he had treated her.

An eligible situation for the mother and daughter soon offered ; the good-will of a small haberdashery and stationary shop was purchased for them by Mr. Villars ; and they found themselves comfortably settled in the way of getting a decent and creditable livelihood. They retained the name of Benson ; and the Villars' family concurred in the propriety of Sophia's wish, to keep Patty ignorant of her origin.

CHAP. VIII.

THE protracted absence of Lord Cranmore on the continent, and of Lord Leonard Ormsby in Ireland, had given full scope to Lady Sabina's misconduct.

She had indeed so completely braved the opinion of the world, as to have finally drawn the attention of her father to her proceedings; vain had been the attempts Lady Kingsborough had made to check her daughter's ungardedness; one decided advantage Lady Sabina had promised herself as the certain result of matrimony—that it would set her free from parental control; and as it rested

more ease than he had expected ; Lady Sabina's ready compliance turned upon motives of which he was not at the time aware.

The blessed day at length came that brought Emily tidings of Lord Cranmore and Henry's return ; but with the cruel alloy, that his lordship was precluded from giving way to his eager impatience to proceed to the Priory, by the necessity of awaiting his father's arrival, who had appointed to meet him in town.

The next letter brought an increase of disappointment ; the Marquis, instead of coming to London, was laid up with severe indisposition, and made a point of his going straight to Castle Ormsby, before he should make the report of his mission to the minister, who happened to be absent. There was no option, but to express passionate regrets to Emily, and obey.

Henry was also prevented from proceeding to the Priory by finding Colonel

Maxwell in town, slowly recovering from an attack of feverish languor, which he proposed shaking off by an excursion into Wales. Judging that the society of a friend might prove as beneficial to his spirits as change of air, he offered to accompany him, and was thankfully accepted; and they set forward the following week.

When Lord Cranmore arrived at Castle Ormsby, Lady Sabina was nearly restored to the brilliancy of her beauty, after a premature confinement, brought on by imprudence and total disregard of her situation. The seven month infant, however, contrary to all expectation, lived; but it was a girl, and consequently of no value to the Marquis, who considered girls merely as incumbrances; nor was the Marchioness much better pleased, who seeing the inefficacy of her daughters so highly prized accomplishments to secure matrimonial felicity, or even respectability, had begun to suspect that something more might be requisite

in female education than merely the choice of the best masters of the day ; and who now shrunk from the idea of a charge, she saw so likely to devolve from the mother altogether upon herself ; for all which good reasons, the poor babe was for the present left solely to its nurse ; and thus far she was certainly the best person to whom she could be trusted, for the Doctor had conscientiously selected a healthy steady young woman, who attached herself the more to her little nursling for the general neglect with which it was treated ; it was not, however, on Lady Sabina's part any illiberal preference of one sex to the other that influenced her indifference to her offspring ; it was to children in general that she objected ; and when her brother testified an eager impatience to see his little niece, she expressed her wonder at it, " as all children seemed to her so much alike, they could excite no interest till they began to talk."

Every fresh instance of her heartlessness grieved Lord Cranmore to the soul, and taking the poor little slighted creature in his arms, he secretly vowed it should find a parent in him.

His apartment at Castle Ormsby had been, by his own choice, in one of the turrets the farthest removed from the part chiefly inhabited by the rest of the family. When he retired to it for the night, his man told him that the servants had got fancies into their heads about its being haunted of late, and wanted his Lordship to have another chamber; but he had not thought it worth troubling him about, as he knew his Lord had no faith in those sort of things.

Lord Cranmore told Thomson he had done right; and just then, thought no farther about the matter.

In the morning, however, the old housekeeper found her way to him, and hoped he had suffered no disturbance. Upon inquiring what sort of disturbance

she apprehended for him? she said the servants had taken it into their heads to talk about lights and noises. "But you never saw any of them, Barnes?" he said, "Why she could'nt say she had ever been much given to the fear of ghosts; but she must acknowledge she rather thought one night she heard something unusual, and was on her way to see what it could be, when she was met and stopped by Lady Sabina's woman, who laughed so exceedingly at her for believing such nonsense, and encouraging the rest in it by her example, that she had desisted from her purpose, and, indeed, almost felt ashamed of it."

Lord Cranmore was so little prone to suspicion, that this made no impression upon him, till Thomson returned to the charge the next night, by saying the old steward had been telling him he had his fears, there was mischief intended to the Castle some way or other, and he was determined to find it out; there

certainly was some trick about that light in the turret room, for he had seen it once himself, but before he could get to it, it had disappeared ; and a very odd-looking person had been seen skulking about, whom nobody knew, and who seemed to take pains to conceal himself. In short, the old man had been upon the watch, with fire-arms, for the last few nights ; but since Lord Cranmore's arrival, the fellow had not been seen : the steward's conjectures went to a gang that were combining to rob the house, and he had taken the men servants in turn to sit up with him.

A sudden chill struck to Lord Cranmore's heart ; the recollection of what had passed between him and his sister, prior to his leaving London, came across him ; and the interference of her woman in checking the investigation of Barnes, now very naturally led him to the conclusion, that the mystery had no reference to housebreaking. Lady Sabina's

perfect satisfaction and cheerfulness under Lord Belmont's complete neglect, for he had not even been tempted to go and see his child, contributed also to point his suspicions to the Duke of Ulswater, whom he knew to be possessed of a small estate at the distance of some twenty or thirty miles from the Castle (which circumstance, from there being no habitable house upon it, had entirely escaped the memory of the Marquis, when he had proposed taking his daughter into the north with him as a security for her conduct). It only remained, therefore, to determine with himself upon the best mode of interfering, without making an *eclat* that would injure his sister's reputation; little imagining how entirely she had in his absence forfeited what he so vainly hoped to save.

A conversation next morning with his father facilitated the business; *his* suspicions had been awakened, and he had directed his confidential secretary, who

was acquainted with the Duke's person, to ascertain the resemblance there might be to it, in the disguised man; the report had brought conviction, and he only awaited the arrival of his son to concert what had best be done. He had delayed one day to speak, till he should see the effect of this event; hoping that if no other means of meeting were substituted to those which Lord Cranmore's occupation of the apartment must for the present check, it might fairly be argued, there was no intention, on the Duke's part at least, of braving the world. His Grace's former prudent retreat, with which the Marquis was now made acquainted, gave very satisfactory assurance that he would be found open to admonition; and Lord Cranmore rode over to Moorhead Farm without delay.

The Duke of Ulswater's spirit of gallantry was of too comprehensive and liberal a species, to confine itself exclusively to the destruction of any one given

female ; it rested on the broad basis of universal devotion to the sex. He had chiefly selected Lady Sabina Belmont, as the most gratifying conquest to his insatiable vanity ; not quite overlooking the circumstance, however, of her husband's early neglect, and even obvious predilection for another. Of her brothers, indeed, considering them merely as men of the world, and therefore not likely to interfere, he had taken somewhat too slight an account ; their absence had misled him into a small '*erreur de calcul*,' as he called it to himself, in imitation of his political Hero's apology for the murder of the D. d'E—.

He received Lord Cranmore with the utmost politeness ; expressed extreme astonishment to find him returned ; took shame to himself for any unguardedness in his unqualified and respectful admiration of Lady Sabina Belmont, that might have drawn the slightest censure upon her ; declaring upon *his honour* (that im-

maculate substitute for religious and moral principle) that Lady Sabina could only have been led by her conscious innocence, into any appearances that might have been misconstrued ; for he begged to repeat upon *his honour* ('yet was not the *Duke* forsworn') that nothing had passed contrary to the strictest purity ; and so jealous did he now feel himself of any injury done to her reputation through his means, that cost him what it might, he would from this hour forego all farther acquaintance. And here, indeed, his Grace was perfectly sincere ; for besides that he began to be somewhat tired of the insipidity of his fair one's conversation, he had a decided aversion for those two annoying interruptions to the freedom of elegant intercourse—duels and damages. He had hitherto judiciously evaded them ; and upon this occasion gave the most unequivocal proof of his sincerity to Lord Cranmore, by instantly setting off for

Tunbridge, to devote himself entirely to the newly married Marchioness of Tadcaster.

Lord Cranmore having settled this matter so much to his satisfaction, proceeded to London, in the blissful anticipation of approaching happiness, as a very few days more were now likely to intervene, before he should be restored to that loved presence from which he trusted never again to be parted.

Lady Sabina, who had perfectly entered into the propriety of her lover's suspended visits during her brother's short stay (for it can scarcely be necessary to give any farther elucidation of the apparitions in the uninhabited part of the Castle), waited with extreme impatience for the result of his departure; which however proved something different from what she looked for, when on the following day this billet was put into her hand by her trusty confidante.

‘ Be assured, my lovely charmer, that

the tortures I endure in banishing myself for the future from your enchanting presence, can only be surpassed by the more exquisite pangs I should feel in being the cause of any disagreeable consequences arising to you from a discovery. I sacrifice more than life to the care of your reputation, in thus bidding farewell to the happiness you have deigned to confer on your ever adoring,

‘ and eternally obliged,

‘ U——.’

The rage of the lovely charmer, on receipt of this flourishing and pathetic address, exceeded all bounds. The Duke valued himself, like his amiable prototype ‘Blamzé,’ in Marmontel’s *‘Heureux Divorce,’* upon an elegant winding up of an affair of gallantry; he was amiably tender of mortifying the feelings of the ladies he quitted, by avowing himself tired of them; and ever gratified their vanity, by pleading some great sacrifice: but Sabina, who had trusted to her irre-

sistible attractions, so constantly the theme of her lover's rhapsodies; for securing her a ducal coronet, the moment a discovery should free her from her present Insensible; now plainly saw she had been a dupe to her own imaginations; for in revolving all that had passed between them, she could not recollect that he had ever expressed the intention in so many words, however ambiguously he had left her to deceive herself, when she alluded to such a result. The Duke reckoned himself too strictly *honourable* to bind himself by uttering what he did not mean to fulfil; if ladies will misconstrue, that is their affair.

Sabina took it strongly to heart, vowed revenge, and inflicted it, as usually happens in similar cases, upon herself.

It was not long before the opportunity offered of putting her plan into execution; and though it somewhat forestals the regular order of events, the account

shall here find its place, that it may not break into matters of deeper interest hereafter.

The assizes at — were expected to be brilliantly attended. Lady Sabina made no doubt of the effect of her charms being such, as would speedily bring back her truant swain upon the wings of jealousy and wounded vanity; and she could find in her heart to carry his mortification to any length, should it even reach to a duel.

Armed at all points for conquest, and assuming the affectation of gaiety and spirits to their utmost extent, her beauty acquired a degree of animation that completely dazzled the beholders; and she effectually captivated the handsomest man in the room; he was a captain of dragoons, and his unrestrained admiration quickly satisfied her, her triumph would be complete. She relied upon the celerity with which reports of this kind are circulated, for speedily reaching the ears

of the Duke, and of the consequences her vanity left her little doubt.

Her new conquest, Captain Woodland, greatly surpassed his Grace in point of personal appearance. He was well connected also ; indeed his nearest relations were deemed by the Marquis of sufficient political importance to check the determination he had made of shutting his door against any of his daughter's followers ; he found himself constrained by considerations of expediency to admit the Captain as an occasional visitor.

A footing once obtained, soon secured greater freedom of intercourse ; and his handsome person was well calculated to soften Lady Sabina's thirst for revenge into gentler feelings. She now began to dread the consequences she had first wished to provoke ; a duel might mistake its man ; and she became as careful to conceal the good understanding that was taking place, as she had at first been to make it obvious. As far as her former

admirer was concerned, she might have saved herself the trouble of thinking upon the subject; he never bestowed another thought upon her, after having acquitted himself so much to his own satisfaction in his elegant valedictory epistle.

The Captain on his part carried his views far beyond mere intrigue. Her beauty had certainly first attracted him; but he soon discovered that she might prove a means of repairing his broken fortunes; his profligacy and extravagance had caused his family to throw him off. Lord Belmont's indifference to the Duke of Ulswater's success, set any apprehension of duelling at rest. Damages were not likely to be laid high under circumstances of such notoriety; if, therefore, he could by an elopement ensure a divorce, and her subsequent marriage with himself, he made no doubt of obtaining from the pride of her relatives that support, which connexion lays

claim to, whatever may be the merits of the object.

Upon these plausible grounds he determined to enact the passionate lover, and he succeeded in awakening feelings in the breast of the Lady so new, that she gave them credit for being of a more refined nature than they had any pretension to ; and actually believed herself to be making a most heroic sacrifice to disinterested love, when she agreed to take the decisive step he so strenuously urged ; so, *un beau matin*, her Ladyship disappeared from the Castle ; and the Captain from his quarters.

CHAP. IX.

ON Lord Cranmore's return to town, his temper was again severely tried by unavoidable delays in the communications he had to make to those in office, who could not exactly suit their leisure to a lover's impatience.

He anxiously endeavoured, however, to turn this provoking circumstance so far to the relief of Emily's present anxiety on her sister's account, as to transmit every particle of information that could be gathered at the public offices, as dispatches arrived.

With deep concern and surprise had

he learnt Sir Edward Arundel's sudden departure for Spain; and enough had been communicated by Emily, to give him a pretty clear insight into the matter as it now stood. It should, indeed, have been mentioned some chapters back, that he had become so much aware of the increasing attachment between Sophia and Sir Edward, during his residence at the Cottage, prior to his foreign mission, as to have felt it incumbent upon him to retract the assurances he had formerly given his brother of safety in that quarter. He had with gentleness stated, and with persuasive eloquence enforced to him, the propriety of relinquishing a pursuit so unpromising of success, even putting Sir Edward out of the question; and laboured the point with all the zeal that could be inspired by the grief of having contributed to lull him into security. Judging from his own steady and deep-feeling mind, he had small reliance on the impression his arguments might make, and

opened with a trembling hand Lord Leonard's answer. How great was his astonishment at the ready acquiescence his brother's letter breathed; pleased as he was at the relief it gave to his fears, he scarce knew how to credit its sincerity, or to forgive the fickleness, if it were real. Of this Lord Leonard may give his own explanation in due time; and as the reader may not have shared Lord Cranmore's anxiety upon the subject, it is humbly hoped the remissness of not having earlier stated this change of sentiment will be overlooked.

When the news came of the last of those brilliant achievements, which, alas! have so profusely inundated the fields of Spain with the blood of our brave sons of freedom! Sir Edward Arundel's name was among the 'severely and dangerously wounded.' Lord Cranmore sent off an express with his letter, to give Emily time to break it in some degree to her sister before the post should arrive.

The wretched Sophia was scarcely more than the shadow of her former self. In the fluctuation of her hopes, fears, and self-reproach, her condition nearly bordered upon distraction : and Lord Cranmore's kindly-meant precaution was in great measure defeated, by her having been in so severely agitated a state the preceding evening, that Emily had not since left her : the letter in consequence was brought to her in Sophia's presence, before the post hour.

In agonized silence she rivetted her eyes upon Emily's face, who turned extremely pale, as she read.

"Arundel is killed!" wildly screamed Sophia.

"Indeed he is not — the very first words of the letter are, 'I can give you the tranquilizing assurance that there is not among the killed one name of particular interest to any individual of your family.'"

"Dangerously wounded then!" cried

Sophia, waiting as one transfixed for the answer.

“ I’m afraid he may be wounded ;” hesitatingly.

“ Mortally !—don’t palliate !” with a half frantic shriek.

“ Not mortally—severely don’t mean mortally.”

“ Oh ! give me conviction !” impetuously snatching the letter out of her hand.

But she trembled so exceedingly, she could not steady it sufficiently to follow the lines.

Emily pointed out the words, ‘ *severely wounded ;*’ and Sophia, who in fact saw nothing, did not perceive the *and dangerously* which followed. The paper dropped from her hands, and she sat completely stupified.

Emily sent for her mother. A very considerable length of time elapsed before Sophia could be roused to any appearance of sensibility ; but when they

had finally succeeded in producing a plentiful effusion of tears, they deemed it necessary to acknowledge the danger likewise; scarcely doubting that Lord Cranmore's communication was but a prelude to worse. The agony produced by this acknowledgment exceeded all bounds.

The arrival of the newspaper was, however, so far a relief, that it proved the words of the dispatch to have been faithfully transmitted, and no more was known.

A greater consolation was brought the next day, in a letter to Mrs. Villars written by a friend of Sir Edward's at his own desire, in which, of course, the wound was made less of, and the circumstance of 'being on his passage home' dwelt upon.

But it is necessary to go a little back, and state the occurrences as they arose.

It has been said that the explanatory letter from Mrs. Villars was put into the

hands of Sir Edward on the very day preceding that fixed upon by the Commander in Chief, for a most desperate attack. The revulsion effected by this letter is indescribable ; the joys of life once more opened to his view, and he exultingly looked forward to the next day, with the eager anticipation of its affording some opportunity of increasing his claims to that military renown so highly prized by Sophia. He imparted his ambitious wishes to the leader, with whom he had ever been on terms of friendly intimacy ; and a post of honour, but of course of danger also, was assigned to him.

No longer was it now his object however to rush into the thickest of the carnage to get rid of a hateful life ; but his gallantry cost him dearer than his recklessness had thus far done ; he acquitted himself so as to obtain particular commendation in the official dispatch ; but he was carried off the field severely wounded in the

face, and having received a shot above the knee of very doubtful issue.

The surgeon was anxious to have him sent home for such treatment as could not be secured in a marching army. This desirable result, which would bring him within reach of a happiness he might not otherwise so speedily have obtained, was what the letter chiefly dwelt on, and the danger as much slurred over as might be. Poor Sophia's tortures were in some degree alleviated by this well-judged letter, and still more so, when a kind proposal was made by Miss Maxwell to engage a near relation of her own, of high surgical eminence, to go down to Plymouth, and await the transport that should bring the wounded home—this was eagerly accepted, and almost immediately followed by another proposal of Sophia's; that she and Mrs. Villars, and Miss Maxwell should join the surgeon there. All attempts to resist this suggestion proving vain, it was acceded to;

and their departure only awaited the accounts that should be obtained from the admiralty of the time when the transport might be expected.

It would be going one step beyond what could easily be credited, even of the disinterested Emily, to assert that she was disappointed at being excluded from attending her unhappy sister upon this occasion—in consideration, it was *said*, of the use her presence was of to Mr. Villars and Agatha; but in fact, to secure to her a more speedy renewal of happiness in the society of the sole master of her future fate. Certain it is, that she would not have demurred an instant, had the sacrifice of her speedy re-union with him been called for; but no less true it must be acknowledged, that she dwelt with deep internal satisfaction on the thought that every alleviating attention *she* could have devised, would be bestowed upon Sophia on this trying occasion, whilst she herself might be enjoying the con-

soling presence of him whose every hope centered in her.

During this interval of daily and hourly anxious expectation, a letter was received from Henry Villars, which somewhat diverted the thoughts of the family from the intense fixedness on the single painful topic which had taken possession of them. His tour with Colonel Maxwell had begun with South Wales, as Aberystwith offered the facility of a few salt water dips, from which the Colonel hoped to receive benefit in the debilitated state in which his late attack of illness had left him.

From Aberystwith, Henry wrote thus:

‘ My dear Emily,

‘ A circumstance of singular interest has occurred here, which I hasten to impart, in the hope that it may draw your thoughts a little away from their present anxious employment.

‘ As Colonel Maxwell and myself were yesterday setting out on our evening ramble, sounds of acute distress suddenly

caught our ear; and looking up to the cliff from whence they proceeded, we saw a child apparently dangling by its clothes, just below the very edge of the rock that starts forward into the bay, and a kneeling female figure bending down over it — the mother! — whose dismal screams seemed to proclaim at once her distress and her helplessness. A little boy was running wildly to and fro on the summit, wringing his hands and adding his piteous shrieks.

‘ My propensity for seeking untrodden paths had fortunately led me to the discovery of a somewhat dangerous one, ascending from the beach up to the very spot. I darted forwards, in the hope of intercepting the fall, while Maxwell with his utmost speed made his way by the usual path up the hill towards the mother. My most fortunate agility brought me to the poor child’s rescue, at the very moment that the half-decayed branch by which she hung, was separating from its parent

stump, by which the mother, who grasped her clothes, without power to do more, must have lost her hold, or been dragged after her ; an indenture of the rock afforded me sufficient steadiness to support the child, till Colonel Maxwell's stronger arm came in aid of the feeble grasp that had held her, and drew her up.

‘I easily made good my own way to the summit ; the poor woman no sooner saw her safe, than she fainted away—the child in Colonel Maxwell's arms was in the same state—but the emotion of the boy, between his insensible mother and sister, is not to be described—running from one to the other—shrieking, sobbing, —“ Mamma dead ! — Nellin dead ! ” — wholly unconscious of any thing we could say to appease him, screaming occasionally too, for “ Jannie to come back ; ” this gave us a hope, that some one belonging to them was at hand, for we were perplexed what to do. It was not

long, however, before the little girl, who was not essentially hurt, only stupified by her fright, gave symptoms of returning sense by putting up her cherub mouth to kiss her brother, "don't cry so!—be dear good boy!—tell Jannie take me home."—He now vociferated "Jannie!" with all his might.—"Tell me where Jannie is," I said to the reviving little girl, "and I will fetch her in an instant"—but she had by this time caught sight of her mother in a state of perfect insensibility, and joined her wailings to those of her brother, and nothing we could say attracted their attention.

' In this dilemma we had just agreed that I should run down into the town for medical and other help, the appearance of the poor woman being such as greatly alarmed us, when Jannie came in sight—the children instantly darted towards her, screaming, "Oh! now Jannie will make mamma alive again!"

' "Merciful God deliver me!" exclaim-

ed the old Scotch woman as she approached, "What's aw this? how can she to faint?"

' "Let's lose no time in explanations, my good woman, but tell us where to take her to."

' "Take her!—troth, I can do that mysel—it's no the first time I hae borne her in these arms;" whipping her up as she spoke, as if it had been an infant—"what ha' ye done tull her i' God's name, to frighten her into her fits?" eyeing us with an air of terrified suspicion.

' "Don't be angry, Jannie!" cried the dear little fellow, who at this moment seemed to have the recollection burst upon him of what had occurred; "O dear, dear, good man!" seizing my hand, and kissing it with fervour; "save poor Nellin from falling into sea and be drowned!" and his little heart filled and overflowed at his eyes, as he hung about my neck, for I had caught him up in my arms. You know, Emily, how I love

children, and never was there a finer little creature than this.

‘The old woman now was fain to apologise; but we checked all conversation, hurrying her on at her utmost speed, with her still insensible burthen; Maxwell carrying the little girl, till we could reach some place of shelter to deposit the mother in, and have recourse to the necessary means of restoration.

‘Fortunately her own lodgings were the first habitation we reached, and her footman was instantly dispatched for the apothecary. On our inquiring the lady’s name, “She *calls* herself Sidney,” answered the woman, with a marked emphasis on the word *call*.’

(It was immaterial to mention at the time, though it now requires to be stated, that Henry, having been again obliged to leave town immediately after his return from investigating at the Priory the grounds for Katty’s letter, was absent during Lord Cranmore’s confessions; and as

the subject was then satisfactorily set at rest, and by no means agreeable to touch upon, neither his Lordship nor Emily had ever alluded to it, with him.)

‘ Maxwell gave a start of surprise, which bespoke some prior knowledge of her ; but he has since evaded my curiosity upon the subject. His interest in her was, however, evidently increased by the discovery. Her maid said, she was in a wretched state of health, and very subject to fainting fits. He watched her returning consciousness with the most anxious solicitude. As she at length opened her languid eyes, they rested upon him : with something of a look of surprise, she faintly articulated, “ What has happened ? ” and before he could answer, she uttered a wild scream, “ Oh ! my Ellen ! where ! where is she ? ” — “ Safe, perfectly safe and unhurt,” he replied ; “ yourself madam is all you need to be anxious for at this moment.”

‘ “ Myself ! *my* life is of no value to any one ! ” she feebly answered.

“ Waes me! my bairn! ‘dinna say that ye’ll just break *my* auld heart gen I lose ye,” cried her old servant.

“ I had been at rest long ago, but for you Janet,” putting out her hand; which the poor woman seized and wept upon.

“ Will you suffer the interference of a stranger, madam?” said Maxwell, “ to put a stop to all exertion of speech, on your part, till the arrival of the surgeon we have sent for, shall ascertain what degree of quiet may be necessary, after the severe agitation you have undergone.”

“ Thank you, sir! I perceive I am deeply indebted to you—I submit—let me but see my child is safe—”

“ Janet now came for the little girl, who, with her brother, had been hanging about me, with a speechless affection and gratitude in their looks and caresses, that penetrated my inmost heart; and it was beautiful to see the tender caution with which they stole on tiptoe to their

mother's bedside, because Janet charged them to be still, that they might not make her worse.

“Are you sure you are not any ways hurt, my darling?” she anxiously inquired.

“Not had; mamma—my back a little sore.”

‘The poor little love had made no complaint, and Janet, not yet fully informed of the nature of the accident, had not thought of examining her—when she did, she found the back very considerably chafed; “but she just takes after her mother,” said the old woman, “never thinks o’ hersel, or makes a complaint.”

‘Our inquiries to-day have been answered by an invitation to tea in the afternoon. When I write again, I may probably be able to tell you more—the fine boy has been with me great part of the morning—and a remarkably interesting child he is; but if I were to begin upon him, I should write a volume, and for the present you have had enough.’

CHAP. X.

THE feelings excited in Emily by the perusal of her brother's letter, were of no common sort. She could not for a moment doubt who Mrs. Sidney was; and a deep interest took possession of her breast, already prepared to commiserate the unhappy woman's situation, from Mrs. Valacort's having acknowledged what Colonel Maxwell had imparted respecting her. His start of recognition at the name, confirmed the identity of the person—"sinking probably under the consciousness and pressure of her errors—deserted—
forlorn.—' My life is of no value to any

one!" she had despondingly said. But it shall be restored to the value that virtuous penitence can impart; thou poor blighted flower!—the hand of kindness shall administer balm to thy diseased mind—religious consolations shall raise thy drooping head. Though thou should'st shrink from the wife of Cranmore, my mother—my sister will befriend thee!"—and tears followed these thoughts, as they passed through the mind of Emily. "I will foster those lovely children," she went on; "assist her in the arduous task of guarding their young minds—we will cover the disgrace of their birth by the pre-eminence of their virtues!"

She hastened to impart her letter and views to Sophia; and even *her* sorrow gave way for a moment to the interest of Henry's narrative; and eagerness to devise some alleviation. They agreed upon informing him of all they had before known of the poor woman's story; accompanied

with an urgent request, that he would prolong his stay at Aberystwith, and consult with Colonel Maxwell, in what way they might come to her succour without mortifying her feelings.

In this consultation they were interrupted by the arrival of an express from Lord Cranmore, with the information that the telegraph gave notice of the transport being arrived at the Lands-end, whence it might be expected to reach Plymouth the next day.

Not an instant was now to be lost.—Sophia, Mrs. Villars, and Miss Maxwell set off without delay.

The state of Sophia admits of no description—it can scarce be imagined; but her frantic steps may be followed to the water's edge; it was impossible to controul them. There she stood—supported by her mother and Miss Maxwell, watching with convulsive eagerness the removal of the wounded into the boats that were to bring them on shore. The

surgeon had secured one for Sir Edward, in which he had himself gone ; and by attending to his motions they could descry the object of their immediate concern. — Upon seeing his apparently lifeless form, lifted down the ship's side, Sophia uttered an agonized scream, and fainted. She was borne back to their lodgings, to all appearance in as lifeless a state as her lover.

Both the one and the other were, however, soon restored to consciousness ; Sophia received from Mr. Preston the consoling assurance that his patient was in as fair a way, as from the nature of his wounds he could possibly have expected to find him ; and Sir Edward's mind was tranquilized by the soothing information, that the object for whom alone he wished to live, had evinced her affection, by coming herself, to witness the steps taken for his accommodation and preservation.

But Mr. Preston was, peremptory in composing an interview between them—

thus far the fever had been happily kept down, and if it could continue so, all would, he hoped, end well ; but he would not answer for the consequences of the slightest agitation. Sophia was compelled to submit to this award. She had just sufficient power of reason left, to feel its necessity—but to obtain her consent to removing from the very next door to him—where every quarter of an hour, and sometimes every five minutes, gained her intelligence of his state ; was more than the united powers of Mrs. Villars, Miss Maxwell, and the surgeon could accomplish.

The arrival of Lord Cranmore, however, facilitated the matter. Emily had written in the most urgent terms to entreat his joining them there. In reflecting upon the essential service his presence might be of, she could scarce forgive herself for the selfish wish that had for a moment caused her to rejoice in being left behind—it was not often she had to

accuse herself of a feeling of the sort; and she now made speedy amends for it, in her answer to the letter she received the very morning after their departure, in which he had announced the conclusion of his diplomatic concern; by the request that he would turn his steps to Plymouth. Great as he felt the sacrifice, he could not hesitate, and he proceeded thither as rapidly as four post-horses could carry him.

He no sooner became aware of the true state of the patient, than he undertook to convince Sophia, of what *she* had refused to credit, when asserted by Mr. Preston; that the very circumstance of knowing her to be so near him, kept the mind of Sir Edward from being restored to the quiescent state, so very necessary to his well doing.

Next to herself, she believed Lord Cranmore to take the deepest interest in Sir Edward—she knew him besides to be wholly incapable of urging a false plea—

and she felt sure that he would be faithful to the promise he tendered, of not relinquishing his attendance till a removal to London could be safely undertaken ; where Mr. Preston was extremely anxious to have him conveyed, for more reasons than he chose to explain to those so deeply interested. However reluctant, she therefore finally agreed to return with her mother and friend to the Priory—where in truth she seemed scarcely alive, but at the hours of expected intelligence ; which of course was transmitted with all the punctuality that could possibly be desired. Little variation, was, however, to be looked for, until the hazardous experiment of removal could be effected.

Meanwhile, a letter from Colonel Maxwell to his niece, opened a new source of disquietude.

It began by cautioning her to read it when she should be perfectly alone, and could command sufficient time to consider of the best mode of proceeding after

she should have read it ; as he felt himself placed in a very embarrassing and delicate predicament.

He then went on, to a brief statement of what Henry had detailed more at length ; he adverted to his surprise at the name of Sidney, and dwelt a good deal on the impression her appearance, her artlessness, and her despondence, had made upon him. He had been unwilling, in the first moment, to inform Villars who she was, as it might place him in an awkward situation respecting his sister—but he would proceed regularly with his narrative, that she might use her best judgment on the merits of the case ; and he thus went on :—‘ The old Scotch woman, her servant, had been on the watch for an opportunity to speak to me, unobserved by Henry or her lady ; and the instant it offered, she abruptly, and in great apparent agitation, asked my leave to wait upon me privately, having some-
of great moment to say. I ap-

pointed the following morning, when I knew my companion would be gone to bathe.

‘ She came accordingly, and opened her business with a very natural expression of fear, that I might think ill of her addressing an entire stranger upon a subject of such peculiar delicacy ; but my Scotch name, and my trustworthy countenance, had emboldened her to seek my advice, in a circumstance that weighed heavily upon her mind—and the poor creature’s emotion made it difficult for her to go on. I told her my best advice should be at her service, and encouraged her to proceed.

‘ She said she had faithfully kept the secret of her lady’s claims upon Lord Cranmore, and should have continued to do so, whilst he remained single ; but now that she found he was going to be married, and her dear bairns’ disgrace would be confirmed by such a step ; the secret burnt in her bosom, and she could keep

it no longer—but she knew not what to do! Here tears seemed to choak her utterance. I said, her mistress must judge for herself in this case. “*She* would wrong herself over and over again, before she would interfere with *his* wishes,” Janet said. “Why, then, who can interfere with any effect?”—“But, sir, is it not against the law of the land to contract another marriage while his first wife—”—“Wife!” I interrupted; “I never heard Mrs. Sidney laid any claim to that title!”—“Nor would she, during her existence,” answered Janet; “but she’s as surely his wife, by the laws of Scotland, as you are sitting there.” I warned her to take care how she asserted what might not admit of proof. “Deed an I’ll prove it by any oath ye shall see fit to administer,” she exclaimed; “Sure, I was witness tull’t mysel—” “Witness to what?” I asked. “To his putting a ring upon her finger, and making declaration before her uncle, and aunt, and myself, that he took Miss Helen

to wife! Far less than that, you know, sir, would stand good in our country." I knew it but too well, indeed. Oh, the dear Emily Villars! what a stroke will this be to her! for you are aware that this is actually sufficient to substantiate the boy's right to the Scotch title and estate at least. I felt for a moment enraged at the old woman's officiousness; but the deep importance to Emily herself obliged me to be calm, and endeavour to ascertain the truth as far as I could. I asked her whether Lord Cranmore denied the circumstance? "She could not accuse him of that—she could not be sure how that was—for Miss Helen was so scrupulous—and to be sure, my lord was not just sober at the time—and Miss Helen had made her swear never to divulge the fact, unless she herself absolved her from the oath; for no power she said, should ever make her hold him to it." I repeated my question whether Lord Cranmore had ever in any way

countenanced the assertion. — She did not believe that from that hour to this, it had ever been recalled to his mind. I scarce know how to credit a disinterestedness so extraordinary. — I asked whether she had preserved the ring; but it seems it was the aunt's ring, and only put into his hand for the purpose. "But if she is so romantically careless of her own fame, does she not consider how she is sacrificing her children?" I said. "Many's the time I have urged this to her," the old woman replied; "and she has always said, her life would not be long, and she should take care they should be righted at her death; but it's just herself I cannot bear to see stamped with disgrace, when she's as truly Lady Crammore as you are Colonel Maxwell." — The faithful creature burst into a fresh passion of tears, wringing her hands and exclaiming "What can I do to save her!" — I endeavoured to pacify her, promising to revolve in my mind what she had told

me; and recommending the strictest silence on her part, till I could form some determination upon the subject, in which I assured her, I felt very strongly interested; but how to assert a lady's claims contrary to her own inclination, is a matter of no common difficulty.—“Aye, there it is,” cried Janet; “it’s just hersel’ that she never cares or thinks about, when others’ happiness is concerned. You’ll never see her like for that.” I inquired what had become of the uncle and aunt. He is dead, and the aunt had disappeared—she knew not whither. Gone to the devil, I suppose; for this trick of the ring has no doubt been some cursed hypocritical salvo for her own concurrence in consigning the poor innocent to ruin. I had some difficulty to pacify the old woman too, upon the score of her broken oath; which, I assured her, I thought her affectionate zeal compensated; in short, there is that faithful simplicity about the creature, that I

cannot doubt of a word she has uttered ; and I must confess she left me more perplexed than ever I was in my life.

‘ The single idea that suggested itself, was to make an attempt at obtaining Mrs. Sidney’s confidence ; as it could only be in consequence of a statement of her own, and employed by her, that I could have any plea for interfering with Lord Cranmore ; and I took every mode I could devise, to lead the conversation to the point I had in view ; but in vain—she was impenetrable.

‘ I therefore now refer the whole to you, dear Marianne : there seems not a moment to be lost. I conclude you will deem it best to communicate what I have written to Mrs. Villars, but I leave it to your dispassionate judgment ; only bear in mind the situation in which Emily would be placed, should she ignorantly form the connexion, and the subsequent claim on the part of this boy be brought forward. But how can Lord Cranmore

possibly be unconscious?—by heaven! it seems to me the most unaccountable thing altogether!—but as I cannot account for it, I will not perplex you: so act to the best of your judgment, which has seldom led you wrong.

‘ Henry has received a letter from his sister, as I suppose you know, interesting him very strongly indeed in the fate of this unhappy young woman; but he has no suspicion of what I have told you; and I shall carefully keep it from him for the present. Quiet and reserved as his natural habits are, his powerful integrity of principle might drive him into stronger measures with Lord Cranmore than I should hope may prove necessary. My penetration has been desperately at fault, if Cranmore himself be not a man of the strictest honour. It is an incomprehensible affair!’

As soon as Miss Maxwell could recover from the extreme disturbance this unlooked-for disclosure gave her, she

without hesitation resorted to Mrs. Villars, with the letter.

The mind of Mrs. Villars was not easily thrown off its bias; distressing as the communication was, she gave it calm and deliberate consideration; and a point of the utmost importance appeared to her, in the first instance, to be, the obtaining an avowal of the fact from Mrs. Sidney. This might best be brought about by female interference, and she soon settled the plan in her mind.

Sophia's natural turn for the romantic, would make her a most desirable assistant upon this occasion, if it were possible to draw her out of her present torpid state; and the exertion might prove beneficial to herself. Agatha offered an ostensible motive for an excursion to the sea; she had of late outgrown her strength, and a more open sea than the baths at Southampton offer, had been recommended for her. Leaving Miss Maxwell with Emily was ensuring a gentle

and judicious breaking of the cruel business to her, should it be found necessary.

Mrs. Villars lost no time in making the communication, and her own proposal upon it, to Sophia; who was effectually roused to a sense of the misery that threatened her sister, and somewhat influenced too, possibly, by the singularly romantic circumstances of the case. She readily acquiesced in her mother's wish, and immediate preparations were made for their departure on the following day; the reason assigned to Emily for its suddenness, being the very natural wish of finding Henry still at Aberystwith. Mrs. Villars's woman only was to attend them, as Mademoiselle Victoire's spirit of investigation made her absence rather desirable upon this occasion.

Sophia felt—deeply felt, that she was removing to a greater distance from the daily intelligence which to her was become the food of life; but her strong affection for her sister now seemed to call

for any sacrifice she could make. Poor Emily, on her part, expressed the utmost eagerness that opportunity might offer for Sophia to concur in the task that had been assigned to Henry; and enjoined her at all events to find means of showing kindness to the children. This was almost more than Sophia could stand; and her emotion might have excited alarm in Emily at any other time; but she now attributed every appearance of the kind to anxiety for Sir Edward.

CHAP. XI.

COLONEL Maxwell received the answer to his letter in sufficient time to prepare Henry for the arrival of his mother and sister, upon the plea of Agatha's health. Henry made no doubt but Mrs. Sidney had a share in Sophia's accession to this sudden plan; and rejoiced in the assistance she would give him in performing the task that had been enjoined him; in which he had as yet not been able to make any progress, from the reserve on the part of Mrs. Sidney, that instantly checked the slightest approach to confidential subjects. It was with consider-

able surprise he heard the Colonel say, that he should immediately inform Mrs. Sidney, who, was expected. Henry apprehended his mother's respect for the world's opinion would induce her to check any ostensible intercourse on the part of Sophia. Colonel Maxwell said, he thought the remoteness of the place, and the respectability of Mrs. Sidney's conduct, would induce Mrs. Villars to deviate from her general maxims. Henry combated this point with earnestness, from the fear of mortifying Mrs. Sidney, by raising expectations from which his mother would draw back; but the Colonel adhered to his assertion, and was determined, he said, to pave the way, by mentioning that Mrs. Villars and Mrs. Delmere were coming; accordingly he took the first opportunity of doing so. Mrs. Sidney changed colour, but said nothing.

After a little pause, he added, " You

will see very uncommonly amiable women in these two ladies."

"I cannot expect, Colonel Maxwell, to have any opportunity of judging of them."

"I imagine Mr. Villars's report of you, will very naturally lead them to seek your acquaintance,"

"I am already under obligations to Mr. Villars, far beyond what I shall ever know how to acknowledge sufficiently; but I cannot suffer him to—I mean—this is an honour I am absolutely compelled to decline." This was spoken in extreme agitation.

"Mrs. Sidney, you have flattered me that you could, notwithstanding the shortness of our acquaintance, consider me in the light of a friend; will you allow me to prove myself such, by offering you my advice?"

"I should, indeed, be thankful for it; a friend is what I have not yet had the

fortune to meet with, except in poor Janet ;” and tears forced their way.

“ Do not hold back from the acquaintance of Mrs. Villars and Mrs. Delmere, if they seek it.”

“ Alas, sir ! they cannot seek it, but from ignorance of who I am, and I will owe nothing to deception.”

“ Would you empower me to settle that matter with them.”

“ Surely, Colonel Maxwell, you must know that I am not in a situation to be visited—and by these ladies of all others !”
—She could not go on.

Poor Helen’s fortitude had been severely tried in the discovery of who it was, that had saved the life of her child ; the conflict between her gratitude and the miserable feelings the very name of Villars called up, had been dreadfully harassing to her susceptible unsettled mind ; and now the bare idea of encountering the females of the family seemed

to sink her to the very earth. Independently, however, of the peculiar feelings connected with *them*, it must be said that she was so perfectly conscious of the situation in which she chose to let herself be placed, that she would not have suffered any woman of reputation to be deceived into forming an acquaintance with her; and from those who had less cause for fastidiousness on that score, she had ever kept aloof; so that in fact she had no habits of female society whatever.

“These ladies of all others,” said Colonel Maxwell, taking up her words, “are exactly those, who will know how to allow, for the possibility of being innocently thrown into a situation of doubtful appearance.

Helen gave a slight start, but made no answer.

“I have reason to think,” he continued, “that Mrs. Villars is prepared to

take an interest in you, that will lead her to seek you !”

“Good heaven, Colonel Maxwell! can she know any thing more of me than from her son’s representation ?”

“I believe she does.”

“Oh! I shall sink into the earth with confusion at the sight of her.”

“Be assured she would not seek you to mortify you ; it will only be with views of kindness, if she intrudes upon your seclusion.”

“The bare idea of it strikes an awe to my heart that I can never get over !” Her emotion became so overpowering that he put an end to the conversation, by saying, “we will let the matter rest for the present ; time enough to renew it, if her urgency should resist your scruples ; you will not object to my repeating what has passed between us.”

“O no !—give such force to my objections as may spare me this cruel trial !”

Henry had absented himself at his friend's desire from this conversation, and taken the children with him. Miss Maxwell had been instructed by Mrs. Villars to urge to the Colonel the expediency of continuing to keep him in ignorance, till the affair could be thoroughly investigated.

Mrs. Villars and Mrs. Delmere arrived according to expectation.

Mrs. Villars felt herself placed in a new and very trying situation. She was voluntarily seeking to bring to light circumstances which must blast her daughter's every prospect; but she saw no alternative. If this poor girl's claims proved, what they were represented to be, no matter how far they might be set at nought in an English court of law, *in foro conscientiae*, they could not be cancelled—not at least with feelings such as Emily's. A shade likewise rested at this moment upon the integrity of Lord Cranmore, who had stated nothing of this nature in his appeal to Mrs. Villars;

and was it possible to give him credit for absolute ignorance of such a circumstance? Such a doubt alone was sufficient to mar the happiness of the sensitive upright Emily—the matter must be satisfactorily cleared up—and she armed herself with firmness to meet the event ; but the agitation of her spirits was immediately obvious to Colonel Maxwell, who had, during a visit he made in Spring at the Priory, been so particularly struck with the serene cheerfulness that characterized her.

Grievously, indeed, was Henry shocked to behold the ravage, unhappiness had made with his sister, in the months that had elapsed since they had met. He had before seen her eye dimmed, and her bloom impaired by sorrow, but now the canker of self-reproach had preyed upon her beauty, till he could scarce recognize her ; the turn of her countenance, the tone of her voice, the languor of her movements—all spoke a complication of

woe that cut him to the soul. She had, however, experienced the consolation, upon her arrival at Aberystwith, of finding a letter from Lord Cranmore, announcing the happy accomplishment of Sir Edward Arundel's removal to London, with less of suffering from fatigue than Mr. Preston could have hoped.

A ray of satisfaction spread itself over her pale features, such as had not for many a month illumined them. She listened with interest to Colonel Maxwell's account of his conversation with Mrs. Sidney, and immediately proposed to cut the business of introduction short, by way-laying her evening walk, and taking her by surprise. The Colonel approved of the suggestion; but in consideration of the very delicate state of Mrs. Sidney's nerves, he proposed that Mrs. Villars should keep back for the present.

Great was the astonishment of Henry to find his mother concurring in plans for an acquaintance which he had felt so

sure would have met her decided reprobation; not having the most remote suspicion of the truth, his pleasure kept pace with his surprise; for Mrs. Sidney and her children had taken very deep hold upon his feelings.

The plan was executed according to Sophia's proposal. Henry, with his sister leaning on his arm, and Agatha by her side, took the path in which he was sure of meeting Helen, setting forth on her evening walk. On perceiving them, she shrunk back in terror, and called the children to her, purposing to return homeward; but they no sooner espied Henry, than with eager exclamations of delight, they ran forwards, unmindful of their mother's call, and thus thwarted her intention. Sophia taking advantage of the circumstance, immediately claimed acquaintance with the little people; by expressing her pleasure to see their looks so much improved from what they were when in her neighbourhood, at Boxmount

Cottage. The tone of kindness to the children, instantly made its way to the heart of the mother; and all sense of dread vanished before the cordial look of good-will and peculiar frankness of Mrs. Delmere's manner; who quickly added, that "Agatha would be delighted to meet with such lively little companions in her walks." Agatha so encouraged, lost not a moment to make her aunt's words good; but seized a hand of each of the children, and proposed setting out forthwith in quest of shells, which she concluded they knew where to find; and Henry offering his other arm to Mrs. Sidney, she could not avoid following the steps of the young leaders.

Sophia, who now gave her mind entirely to the object she had in view; and who was by mental suffering subdued to a tone of gentleness that lent an irresistible charm to her other attractions; gained so complete an ascendancy over the fears of her companion, in the course of their

walk, and converted them into such unqualified admiration, that Mrs. Sidney was not much startled when, upon their separating, a proposal was made for introducing her next day to Mrs. Villars.

During this walk, Mrs. Villars had an opportunity of hearing from Colonel Maxwell a variety of circumstances, tending either immediately or remotely to corroborate the testimony of old Janet; so as not to leave her the shadow of a doubt that this unhappy young creature was actually the victim of her own enthusiastic disinterestedness.

The manner of Mrs. Villars was not of the highest polish, but it was better; it was the spontaneous effusion of a heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness. The strongest feelings of compassion now also took possession of her mind, and she received poor Helen in a way well calculated to obliterate every impression, but those of love and confidence, from her breast.

Opportunity quickly offered to those so deeply interested, of leading the conversation to points that might somewhat unfold the turn of Helen's disposition and thoughts. To the inquiry after her favourite occupations, she replied, "Reading, and ornamental work for her children."

"What kind of reading did she prefer?"

"Poetry—novels—plays."

"Who was her favourite poet?"

"Pope—Prior. She had the Epistle to Abelard, as well as Henry and Emma, by heart. She knew no heroines to compare to them. She had thrown aside Rousseau's Eloise in extreme indignation, when she found her giving up her lover to her father; '*she* knew nothing of love who could act so,' she said; but above all she delighted in the German sentimentalists; in short, the enthusiastic Helen had bewildered her untutored mind in such a labyrinth of nonsense—

had rioted in the luxury of indiscriminate novel reading, till reason was wholly overpowered by imagination. The wild energy of her expressions, contrasted so singularly with the simplicity, amounting almost to childishness of mind and manner, which manifested itself upon all occasions, that Mrs. Villars and Sophia felt interested beyond what they could have conceived.

Her exterior was very attractive, without any approach to regular beauty; her's was the "sleepy eye that speaks the melting soul;" she had fine teeth, a sweet smile, a delicately fair complexion, heightened into brilliancy by the deceptious bloom peculiar to the malady under which she laboured; her form, by nature slight, was reduced almost to a skeleton; and perfectly careless of dress, and appearance, she made no attempt to conceal the ravages of illness. A more artless child of nature never came out of nature's hands.

She took the first opportunity in which she found herself alone with the ladies, of adverting to their condescension in noticing her; and expressed her gratitude in the warmest terms. She added, with considerable emotion, that "she hoped Miss Villars was very like Mrs. Delmere, and then Lord Cranmore would be happy."

"And can you really be so entirely divested of self?" Mrs. Villars asked, "as to wish him happy with another."

"Not if I could have continued to make him happy myself; but when I lost that power, why not?"

"Might not his continuing single, ultimately bring him back to a sense of what he owes you for the great sacrifice you have made to him."

"Sacrifice!" she repeated. "I thought it no sacrifice to please him. I had no other happiness."

"Did you set no value on the opinion of the world?"

“He was my world!”

“Poor child!—and no mother to guard you!”

The look and tone in which this was said, were so new to Helen, they vibrated upon her heart, and filled her eyes.

“Mother!—O no!—she has long been dead.”

“And your aunt took no trouble to advise you?”

“My aunt always said—I don’t know how to tell you what she said—but indeed I did not act upon that!”

“Pray repeat what your aunt said!” cried Sophia eagerly.

“She said I was pretty,” blushing up to her eyes as she spoke, *“and I must make the most of it!”*

“Shocking!—but your Bible would strengthen you against such vile suggestions,” observed Mrs. Villars.

“Would it?—but I had no Bible.”

“Good heaven!—and no one to teach you what it enjoined?”

“ I had no confessor after I left Ireland.”

“ Confessor!—you are then a Roman Catholic ?”

“ Yes—no—that is I was—but Sidney was not—and so I wanted to be of his religion. I was sure he must be right.”

Poor Helen!—she was indeed a disciple of the German school—substituting sentiment for principle.—Love, was *her* religion, and she acted accordingly.

“ And it probably did not suit Sidney’s views to have you better instructed,” said Mrs. Villars.

“ O madam ! you wrong Sidney, if you attribute my misconduct to any views of his. I have no one to blame but myself.”

“ And you possibly glossed over your error to your own conscience, by determining to consider yourself as his wife, in the eye of heaven.” Mrs. Villars spoke this pointedly, in the hope of bringing

her to an avowal of the important circumstance.

After a moment's hesitation, she replied, "I only considered how I might make him happy."

"And did not such disinterestedness on your part awaken his generosity? I can see but little difference between misleading, or suffering so innocent and artless a being, as he found in you, to mislead yourself." Finding she did not readily answer, Mrs. Villars continued, "Was not the taking the name of Sidney a deception? it does not belong to his family."

"Indeed it was his true name then. He had taken it for an estate left him by a distant relation of his mother, before his father came to the title; and I can never bear to call him by any other than that, in which all my short-lived happiness was comprised."

"Short-lived indeed! — moments of

bliss purchased by years of repentance and misery !”

“ O ! not so, madam !—not so indeed !—I never have for an instant repented—regret—not repentance, wastes my life—regret that I had not attraction sufficient to retain him, for whom alone I wished to live.”

“ And not a shadow of resentment for the dereliction !” exclaimed Sophia : “ this is a devotedness I could not have credited, had I read of it.”

“ Dear madam ! recollect how far, that of Emma surpassed it !”

“ But *that* you know to be a fiction.”

“ Ah, he well knew woman’s love tho’ who feigned it !”

“ To submit to obloquy, while a lover’s passion continues to repay the sacrifice, is what many a deluded victim has done before ; but voluntarily and uncomplainingly to take up with the loss of character—”

“ Would any one,” she interrupted

precipitately, "that truly loved, hesitate to lay down their *life* for the happiness of the object of their affection?"

"Oh no!" cried Sophia, with enthusiasm.

"Such heroic devotion is not common, but I believe it may exist," said Mrs. Villars.

"And what am I doing more, in submitting without complaint, my happiness to his? Had he said, 'Die, Helen! your death will make me happier than your life!' I would have been content to receive my death at his hand; or if I could have believed it his wish, I think it should not have been long in coming to my relief. But he said, 'Live Helen! for the sake of my children, and be good; and my friendship shall ever continue yours.' So I have tried to obey him; but I feel it will not be much longer now before I am at rest."

Sophia embraced her with warmth. Mrs. Villars could not restrain her tears.

Helen was ready to worship them for sympathy so unhopèd for.

“ And do you conceive that you have a right to extend your disinterestedness to the detriment of your children ? ”

“ Oh no ! ” she exclaimed with quickness, “ my children will be exonerated from disgrace when I am out of the way ; that increases my impatience ” — She stopt suddenly, feeling she was betraying her secret.

“ How so ? ”

“ Forgive me, madam ! — I cannot explain.”

“ So very little is required to constitute a marriage by Scotch law, that perhaps — ”

“ I entreat you, madam ! ” interrupting her precipitately, “ not to urge me upon this point.”

“ I will not urge any thing to give you pain,” returned Mrs. Villars, quite convinced, by what had now unintentionally dropped from her : “ you are a most ex-

traordinary creature! and have excited an interest in me beyond what I could have believed possible under the existing circumstances. I will wait for farther confidence, till you shall be satisfied how safely you may repose it.”

And Mrs. Villars, with an oppressed heart, left her, to write an account to Miss Maxwell of what had passed; with a view to her preparing poor Emily for what now seemed inevitable.

CHAP. XII.

Lord Cranmore was most painfully detained in London by Emily's urgent entreaty not to leave Sir Edward in his present precarious state. A consultation of eminent surgeons had finally decided against the amputation of the leg, which at first had appeared to Mr. Preston unavoidable; although the extraordinarily reduced and feeble state of the patient had made it seem too hazardous, for him to take the decision upon himself, at Falmouth. The fever was still however so constantly kept up by the daily exfoliations from the jawbone, which had been severely fractured, as to make the progress in

amendment gradual, to a degree that rendered it scarcely perceptible.

This was a severe test of devotedness to the will of the lady of his fate—for Lord Cranmore could not be of any material use to the sufferer; and however affectionately interested for him, he did not, like poor Sir Edward, subscribe to old Montaigne's already quoted decision upon the subject of love and friendship—in fact, his adoration of Emily was so compounded of the two sentiments, as to make it impossible to draw a line of demarcation between them.

Lord Leonard Ormsby's expected return at this juncture promised a most seasonable relief from the cruel attendance—his friendly care might equally be relied on, now that all rivalry was so decidedly out of the question; for his protracted stay in Ireland had been avowedly to cultivate the apparent partiality of an agreeable little widow possessing a jointure of £4000 a year, at

her own disposal ; which, together with her due sense of his Lordship's merits, had given her a preponderance over the distant and insensible Sophia. And this was what had so fully prepared him to give a ready assent to the arguments urged by his brother, when he had imparted his mistake respecting Sir Edward Arundel.

Lord Cranmore settled it in his own mind, that a very few hours after his brother's arrival should terminate his absence from his heart's idol ; and his impatience increased, as the so long wished-for moment approached.

“ I have but staid to embrace you, my dear Leonard,” he exclaimed ; “ to constitute you head nurse in my stead, to our wounded friend ; and now I fly on the wings of love, to claim my adored Emily—

“ Nay, nay—not the very moment I arrive, Cranmore ! Give me one day for all we have to hear and to tell—”

“ If you knew how my heart has been

tortured by delays, you would not so much as ask an hour, Leonard. You would think that my even stopping for this momentary sight of you, could only be prompted by no common brotherly feeling, and repay it by hastening my steps to my so cruelly protracted happiness."

"But you talk of constituting me head nurse in your stead; what do I know of nursing? and scarcely do I know enough of Arundel to take any responsibility upon me."

Lord Cranmore, hurt and surprised to find his good-humoured brother starting difficulties where he expected the kindest concurrence in forwarding his wishes, replied, in somewhat of an altered tone, "I am not selfishly seeking to put you upon very trying duty; for in fact poor Arundel's state does not admit of any thing being done for his comfort, but by the medical attendants and actual nurses. He can neither be allowed to

“speak, as it moves the jaw ; nor has he as yet even strength to be read to. It is therefore merely for the daily and hourly reports to Mrs. Delmere, that my attendance has been deemed of such consequence.”

“The devil, Cranmore ! this is worse and worse ! how can I correspond with the quondam sovereign of my destiny, whose chains I have thrown off, and about my rival too !” Lord Leonard sought to disguise real anxiety under affected playfulness ; but his brother interrupted him with extreme seriousness.

“If my peace is of any value to you, Leonard, you will make no more objections. Write to Mrs. Villars, instead of Mrs. Delmere ; I will accompany it with an explanatory line ; and by the time I have written it, my carriage will be at the door—”

“Why then, my dear fellow !” more seriously, “the fact is, that I cannot let

you go till—till I have imparted something of consequence—and—and curse me ! if I know how to set about giving you pain—”

“ You have been doing *that* for the last few minutes, so do not hesitate—no serious distress in which you are involved I hope—”

“ No—would to heaven it were !—I don't take my own distresses long to heart. The thing is—devil take me if I know how to begin !—but—but—are you quite sure, Cranmore, Helen has no claims upon you ?”

“ Helen !” starting in amazement.

“ Are you quite aware, my dear fellow, how little goes to legalizing a Scotch marriage ?”

“ What can you mean ? never did the most remote idea of marriage enter either into her head or mine !”

“ Can you be morally certain that in no tender moment of your long connexion

you might utter what, if now brought forward against you, would tie you down—”

“Great God of heaven!” exclaimed Lord Cranmore; “the bare suggestion of such a possibility would go near to drive me mad—by all that’s sacred, Leonard! neither in thought, word or deed, can any thing of the kind be laid to my charge. You know my poor affectionate simple-hearted girl—you have often seen her in private—did the remotest hint of any such thing ever fall from her?”

“Never—never. She is the most self-devoted victim of love I ever beheld, or could have imagined.”

“For pity’s sake, do not talk of her in a light that tortures my very soul to reflect on! but tell me in the name of heaven what can have put thoughts so injurious to me into your head!”

“I received a letter before my departure from Dublin—”

"From Helen?"

"No—from a rascally Irish black-guard."

"My dear Leonard!—what, in God's name, could that have to do with me?"

"He states his wife to be a relation of Helen's—and witness to some transaction of a ring—"

"An impudent attempt to squeeze a sum of money from you; depend upon it!"

"Aye—so far is plain enough; he fairly says a sum of money might purchase silence."

"As I hope to be saved, Leonard, there is no silence to purchase."

"Here is his cursed scrawl—will you read it?"

"It's a name I never heard of," looking at the signature, and glancing his eye over the letter. "Be assured, it is not worth bestowing a thought upon."

"So I had determined to treat it, and accordingly took no notice of the letter;

but the rascal found his way to me next day, and said his wife was Helen's aunt, and her name Mackay."

"That was the name, sure enough, of the artful devil on whom poor Helen seemed dependent when I became acquainted with her; but this evidently proves it a fetch to obtain money."

"He asserted the circumstance of a ring—"

"I never was possessed of one—nor do I believe Helen is—from knowing my foolish dislike to them; so it is not even a well imagined contrivance."

"I hope, from my soul, it may prove nothing more; but I swear I could not help being staggered at last; though to him I professed resolute disbelief—till he insisted upon bringing his wife; and she was so circumstantial—and so eager to take any oath I could require, to the truth of her assertions—"

"She would not stick at any oath that might answer her purpose; but what

circumstances did she pretend to state then?"

"That in the presence of herself, her former husband, and Helen's maid, you had put a wedding ring upon Helen's finger, and proclaimed her your wife—"

"It's false as hell!" interrupted Lord Cranmore, now worked up to a fit of passion very unusual to him.

"The woman referred to Helen herself for the truth of the assertion; and added, if *she* did not know how to assert her right, now that you were going to marry another, she had relations that would do it for her; unless silenced by such a consideration as her husband had alluded to in the letter."

The unconscious Lord Cranmore adhered to the conviction in his own mind of the falsehood; but he felt the necessity of making the matter clear as day, and he said with much emotion, "There is a very simple mode, though a very distressing one, of putting it beyond a doubt. I

will write to poor Helen—she is truth itself; and I owe it to the lovely woman I hope shortly to call mine, to leave not the shadow of a doubt upon an assertion like this; this must involve another cruel delay; but there is no knowing how far they may attempt to carry their machinations—and I will not see my Emily, till I am armed with complete refutation.”

And he instantly set about the painful task; leaving his brother wholly at a loss what to think; but satisfied with having got over his own difficulty at least, in the communication, which had dwelt heavily upon his mind.

CHAP. XIII.

THE proposed gentleness of disclosure to Emily, was thwarted in a way that had not been anticipated.

Colonel Maxwell had a valet, who was a devoted admirer of the fair sex, and Mademoiselle Victoire, who could not be long without discovering this weakness, availed herself of it ; sparing no pains to secure her conquest. A tender correspondence ensued, where 'raptures' and 'racks,' and 'the Gods' and 'Cupid' were blended, with every little circumstance that either could pick up, relative to their master's concerns ; an attention to each other's taste, in which neither of them

were by any means deficient. On the present occasion, zeal to furnish his beloved with a tale of more than common interest, had prompted Westall, after introducing the old Scotch woman to her private interview with his master, to take his own station in the apartment of Henry Villars; which was only divided by a wooden partition from that in which the distressing tale had been unfolded; and where enough of it accordingly found its way to his ears to furnish out in his next letter some part of the truth, with fillings up and suppositions of his own; all imparted under the seal of strict secrecy. But, unfortunately, Victoire's very limited knowledge of the language, joined to the very eager desire of making herself of consequence, induced her, as soon as she made out that something very dreadful and horrible had happened, which she could not clearly comprehend, to have recourse to *Madame Katze*, in confidence upon the occasion.

Poor Katty's hair stood an end at what she read; and the letter dropped from her hand as she finished it; in all the horror of discovering, that it had clearly come to light, Lord Cranmore had deserted and administered slow poison to his first wife; but not having patience to wait for the completion of its effects, had sworn her to secrecy, and was now making a victim of Emily, and perhaps, like another Blue-beard, preparing a similar fate for her; indeed the narrative was so interlarded with conjecture and misapprehension, that a clearer head than Katty's might have been bewildered with it—no wonder, therefore, her poor brain was completely unsettled; the greater surprise was, that she had sufficient presence of mind left, to consider the importance of saving Emily from the too abrupt knowledge of it. Having enjoined Victoire to the strictest secrecy, she prudently determined to confine herself to her own room for the evening, as a

security against betraying what would, she was sure, go near to destroy her niece.

So far, nothing could be better, and more unlike her usual proceedings.

When sent for, to come down to tea, she returned for answer, ‘that she found herself very unwell, and desired to be excused for the evening.’ Emily, alarmed at this message, only stopped long enough to give her father his tea, before she repaired to her aunt’s apartment, to inquire into the nature of her disorder.

There, indeed, she found her in disorder enough ; pacing her room—wringing her hands—ejaculating—calling down vengeance upon the whole wicked race of man ! Emily stood aghast—she thought sudden phrenzy had seized her.

“ My dear aunt ! what can be the matter ?—do compose yourself ! ”

“ The matter ! don’t ask me ! don’t, for goodness sake ! *you* of all people, my

poor dear child! oh, you'll know it all but too soon, God help you!"

Emily now conceiving some misfortune to have befallen the travellers, became dreadfully alarmed, and entreated to know the worst!

"Impossible, my dear! impossible! I never can bring myself to inflict such a wound upon your tender heart! no, never shall you know it from me! oh, who could have suspected him! he, of all people upon earth, to turn out a villain!"

Now aware that it was Lord Cranmore she was inveighing against, Emily naturally concluded Katty had got hold of some vague report respecting Mrs. Sidney; and she entered upon the explanation he had given to Mrs. Villars; but her aunt, thrown wholly off her guard by finding something had transpired, interrupted her precipitately, "Mercy defend us! my poor dear child! how shockingly you are deceived! why she comes out to be his

true and lawful wife! and has confessed it all.—I've seen the letter—”

Emily faintly stammered out, “This must be misrepresentation—”

Which led Katty to prove her assertion by reference to the letter, from which she quoted without mercy, all she could recollect, as well as much that probably was not to be found in it. She might have gone on without interruption for any length of time—her auditor sat without sense or motion—the conviction had flashed upon her mind, that whatever exaggeration there might be in these representations, the suddenness of Mrs. Villars and Sophia's departure for Aberystwith was clearly connected with it; and their concealment of the motive, left no doubt of its being a distressing one.

Katty, terrified at her appearance, flew to the bell with violence, and then ran screaming to the stair-head for help; “she believed Emily was dying.” This quickly brought Miss Maxwell to her assistance,

who no sooner understood the cause of her friend's apparent stupefaction, than she applied herself, by commiserating soothings, to endeavour to bring her to tears ; and when she at length succeeded in this, she proceeded to communicate the actual circumstances imparted by the Colonel. The first words that broke from Emily were, " May he stand acquitted to his own conscience ! I can bear to be bereaved of any thing but my opinion of him ! "

" Be assured he will not forfeit it ! " exclaimed Miss Maxwell. " I would stake my life upon his honour ! "

Emily's tears now flowed freely and plentifully ; and with fervent piety, she raised her supplicating eyes for support, where they had never yet been raised in vain.

Meanwhile, the total inability of Mr. Villars to move out of his chair, left him in a state of fearful agitation, till the repeated summons of his bell, brought

Katty herself to account for the alarm she had given ; but her narrative was not calculated to quiet his irritated nerves, and a far different effect was produced here from the scene above stairs ; the rage of the incensed father knew no bounds ; and wholly insensible to the pain of his gouty limb, he started on his feet—vowed vengeance on Lord Cranmore, in a paroxysm of fury—which, however, was quickly checked by its own violence—for it produced a spasm in the stomach, that caused him to fall back into his chair, in an agony which would soon have proved fatal, but for the housekeeper's having at this moment come fortunately within hearing ; and by instantly resorting to the cordials administered in cases of alarm, she was the means of saving her master's life ; for as to poor Katty, she seemed rooted by terror to the spot she stood on ; and only by her screams gave any token of remaining sense. She soon became an object of solicitude herself ; for a fever

actually ensued upon the various emotions she had undergone; and to have beheld the meek resignation and self-possession with which Emily nursed and comforted her, for the mischief she had occasioned; no uninformed spectator could possibly have conjectured *her*, to be the deep sufferer from these distressing occurrences.

Mr. Villars became somewhat calmer by the inspection of Colonel Maxwell's letter, which Marianne now imparted to him; still, however, the conduct of Lord Cranmore remained in so doubtful a light, that he determined to put the investigation into the hands of his son, and obliged Miss Maxwell to write under his dictation to Henry, enjoining him to repair instantly to London, and obtain from Lord Cranmore the elucidation of this incomprehensible affair.

Mrs. Villars's letter to Miss Maxwell now came to awaken deep interest in the cause of Helen; and in no bosom did it work more forcibly than in that of the

generous Emily. Confirmed by Miss Maxwell in her entire reliance upon Lord Cranmore's noble nature; satisfied that he must have been unconsciously, however unaccountably to all appearance, entangled, she exclaimed with fervour, "O! that my powers of persuasion may prove efficacious to induce him to restore this deluded victim of enthusiastic feeling to the character and station in society that is her just due!"

"Is it possible, Emily!" cried Miss Maxwell, "you can be equal to such a heroic sacrifice of your own happiness?"

"There is no heroism, Marianne, in foregoing what could no longer deserve that name; however unconsciously he may have been drawn in, there is but one course for him to take, the instant his eyes shall have been opened; and that I shall forcibly urge, if the poor girl herself cannot be brought to explain it. I shall only wait to see the issue of my mother's efforts with her. Meanwhile, there is no

danger of his coming hither, while Sir Edward's situation continues so precarious: to see him, might indeed enhance the difficulty of my task, though I trust nothing could shake my determination."

But Emily was saved from this severe trial of her fortitude; Helen's answer to Lord Cranmore, although no able scribe, was sufficiently explicit.

This was her letter:

'So solemnly called upon, I must speak the truth. Sidney, the fact is so! but you were not yourself at the time; they intoxicated you with base and wicked art, to betray you into an act which in your understanding you would not have done.—Me they deceived also. I thought that what we did was their frolic only. I had no thought of its having power to bind you. When I knew that, there is no power on earth could have made me use that claim upon you; but indeed, I never wished it; I was contented with your love.

‘ Sidney, I did then think myself your wife; but I had no desire for the world to know it. I would not have them. I knew well I was not worthy of you: never, when I was most happy, was the presumptuous thought in my heart to be your known acknowledged wife.

‘ My happiness soon fled. Then, not for worlds should I have told that fatal secret. You were free. I thought you should be happy as you deserved, and I should carry my secret with me into the grave.

‘ That was my purpose a long while, till I considered what should become of my children; it was terrible to think that dishonour should rest upon their names. Then I resolved I should leave a faithful written memorial of that which had passed, which at my death would be sent to you, that you might acknowledge your children.

‘ Oh! what was I doing? I would have destroyed your happiness for ever: but I am saved from that fatal error, I thank

heaven, which has sent me light. Angels have crossed my path, and have shown me things I had never conceived of before. They made me understand how blindly I was now acting in my purpose towards you, and that this discovery coming too late, should surely blast life to you, and to her whom you have chosen.

‘ I have now therefore made this acknowledgment to you tho’ most unwillingly, for now must I be the bar to your happiness, for which I would die ; but it will not be long, Sidney. For some time past has my life been fast decaying, and lately I have received a very severe shock, since when I think it is hastening to its close.

‘ Forgive me that I delay your happy hour. May it come to bring you happiness ! may you be happy, Sidney ! It has been my first, my only wish, since I knew you—It shall be my last.

‘ HELEN.’

Every particle of generosity, as well as of honour, in the breast of Lord Cranmore was roused by this letter; and how much more still of admiration would he have felt to be poor Helen's due, could he have appreciated the forbearance that checked every allusion to the present penitent state of her mind; for fully was her compunction now awakened, and deeply sensible had she become of her errors; but she was incapable of increasing his distress by any appeal to his compassion.

Without one moment's hesitation, however, he resolved to obey the imperious dictates of duty; and whilst his travelling carriage was getting ready to take him straight to Aberystwith, he wrote these few words to Emily:

'A circumstance the most unforeseen takes me far from the happiness I had in view. I most earnestly entreat you to suspend all judgment, till I can fully

detail my motives from Wales, whither I am now compelled to go. The sacrifice I feel myself bound to make, is the strongest claim I can lay to the continuation of your esteem. To whatever fate I may now condemn myself, be assured my feelings towards you must continue unaltered to the last hour of my existence.

CRANMORE.

‘ P. S. I leave my brother Leonard in charge of Arundel.’

Emily was at no loss to construe the full import of these scarcely legible lines. She honoured him more than ever, for the promptness of a resolution which she knew how to appreciate, for she knew how ardently she was beloved. He was nobly and freely making the sacrifice to which she had turned all the strength of her mind to urge him; had he shrunk from it, she must have esteemed him less. Soon, however, a deeper sadness stole into her soul: she had lost the

support she had unconsciously derived from the pride of setting him the example of disinterestedness ; and she sunk into a state of wretchedness, that well nigh overpowered her faculties.

She did not fail to seek in the retirement of her closet, a better and more permanent stay, than pride can ever lend ; and the fervour with which she incessantly turned to it, obtained sooner than could almost have been hoped for, the resignation necessary to save her from sinking under the blow.

It was to the rapid increase of confidential intercourse with Mrs. Villars, that Helen owed the new light in which she now viewed her past conduct ; every avenue to her heart was opened by the kindness with which she was treated ; delicacy had in the first instance kept Mrs. Villars from urging for farther disclosures ; but Helen soon ceased to have a wish for concealment, and the

conversations that ensued, gave rise to very new views indeed, in her simple uneducated mind. Great was her astonishment when made to understand the injury she would have occasioned to the unconscious Emily, by the concealment she had imposed upon herself. Her whole soul engrossed by one single object—solicitude for Sidney's happiness—she had never reflected upon the consequences of the testimonials that must establish her children's claims to legitimacy; which of course must have annulled Emily's marriage, as having taken place during her life. She offered up a fervent thanksgiving to the throne of mercy, for having been spared, by the fortuitous meeting with Henry Villars, from thus unintentionally blasting the very purpose, to which she was making so great a sacrifice.

Still she adhered to her generous forbearance with respect to herself; and did

not impart the letter she received from Lord Cranmore, till after she had answered it, lest Mrs. Villars should have urged her to make the appeal to his compassion, from which it was her firm resolution to refrain.

CHAP. XIV.

THE letter Mr. Villars had caused to be written to his son, neither found him unprepared nor unwilling to obey its mandate. From the moment Mrs. Villars had discovered the positive bar to her daughter's marriage, she had imparted the circumstance to Henry, in the hope of checking by her arguments the very interference his father was so eager to urge. Henry's mind was distracted by the various interests that filled it: his friendship for Lord Cranmore—his fraternal affection—the wrongs of the hapless Helen—the interest of the lovely children—all pulled different ways; and his

perplexity was at its utmost height, when his father's letter came, to fix his mode of proceeding, leaving him no other option than that of substituting every mild persuasion that heart or sense could suggest, to the peremptory tone recommended to him by his irritated parent. Unwilling to alarm his mother with the idea of what might occur, he cautiously suppressed the reception of the letter ; and availed himself of the circumstance of a communication made by Mr. Valacort to Sophia, as a blind for his purpose.

Mr. Valacort wrote word that the early meeting of parliament had called him to town, and his wife's continued sufferings from her arm had induced her to accompany him, which put it in their power to offer Sophia the means of being at hand to watch the first moment of Sir Edward's convalescence that might admit of her seeing him ; this was most eagerly caught at by Sophia, who, now she was no longer upheld by the

consciousness of contributing to the restoration of Helen's peace of mind (which seemed to have devolved wholly upon Mrs. Villars) had for some days been sinking into a state of extreme discomfort, at feeling herself so much farther removed from the object of her tenderest solicitude. She instantly determined upon setting off next morning, and Henry made the plea of taking care of his sister his ostensible motive for accompanying her. Mrs. Villars felt no anxiety as to any farther intentions he might have, as the solemnity that marked Lord Cranmore's letter to Helen led her to anticipate the step that Helen's answer would produce.

In the midst of the preparations for their departure at an early hour next morning, Agatha came running in breathless from her evening walk, to say, there was a ship in danger, and the people all crowding to the beach, and boats going to get the passengers out of her ; no more

was necessary to impel both brother and sister to speed to the scene of distress, with the offers of any assistance they might afford to the rescued sufferers. And how was Sophia's ever ready zeal to succour the unfortunate rewarded beyond her utmost hopes, when in the very first person landed from the boat she recognized Mrs. Fitzclare !

Faint with fatigue and fright, and perfectly drenched, she had scarce power to throw herself into Sophia's arms, in agitation too mighty for speech. Anxious to convey her without loss of time to her lodgings, Sophia left to Henry the care of the remaining sufferers, and hastened on with her almost helpless charge, whom the servant (sent after her by Mrs. Villars, as the alarm had spread) was assisting her to support ; when they were met by Agatha holding a hand of each of the little Sidneys. Mrs. Fitzclare's eye falling from Agatha upon the little girl, she exclaimed with a wild scream—

“ Merciful heaven ! do I see the living image of my lost child ?—oh ! who are you ? ”

“ Helen Sidney,” said the child.

Mrs. Fitzclare uttered an hysterical laugh, and fainted away.

The truth darted at once into Sophia’s mind. The circumstance of Mrs. Sidney’s being indeed the long lost object of Mrs. Fitzclare’s fruitless research, had been so entirely kept out of sight, by the variations in Helen’s account of herself, from the narrative imparted at the Priory by her mother, that this idea had never occurred.

Sensible of the extreme importance in Helen’s delicate state, that the discovery should not be too abruptly made, she enjoined the strictest silence to the children upon what had happened ; and with the servant’s help was endeavouring to carry the fainting woman forward ; when Janet, who had been left behind by the rapidity with which the young ones

had run on, came up; and seeing something the matter, was beginning with an offer of her assistance, till the sight of Mrs. Fitzclare's inanimate countenance called forth a frantic shriek of "The wraith! the wraith!—oh, my blessed mistress!"

"For mercy's sake, command yourself, Janet!" cried Sophia; "it is her very self!"

The poor old woman, with a desperate energy and strength beyond what she could have been expected to possess, raised her in her arms, and ran on with her at so extraordinary a pace, that Sophia, not aware of her intention, had scarce sufficient quickness to save her taking her at once to Mrs. Sidney; and so bewildered were her senses, that it was with difficulty she was brought to comprehend the danger to which she would have exposed both mother and daughter.

In Mrs. Villars's lodgings she was now

however deposited ; and Colonel Maxwell having taken charge of the children, the old woman was sent off in quest of the surgeon, as the most likely mode of giving her time to recover the use of her faculties.

Mrs. Fitzclare had been so completely spent with fright and fatigue, before this sudden revulsion occurred, that she fell from one fainting fit into another, during the evening and night ; never recovering sufficient consciousness between them for any explanation.

Sophia's departure was now of course postponed. She did not leave Mrs. Fitzclare's bedside ; and Mrs. Villars next day undertook the critical task of preparing poor Helen for the important disclosure. It required all her caution, for the slightest agitation was almost more than her enfeebled frame could support.

Helen scarce knew whether joy or dread was the predominant feeling of her

mind on the discovery. All traces of her mother had been obliterated from her earliest childhood, in the belief of her death; her own conduct had been calculated to tinge her parent's cheek with the blush of shame. How could she hope again to meet with that tender indulgence, which she did not imagine ever to have existed in any female heart, but those of Mrs. Villars and Mrs. Delmere?

Janet, however, whose tongue was now set at liberty, was eloquent in the praises she had for so many years been precluded from uttering; first by the authoritative prohibition of Captain Fitzclare, and after his death, by her own discretion, averse to excite unavailing regret in the bosom of Helen for a parent she had herself been taught to believe no longer in existence.

Helen soon became fully sensible of the magnitude of the blessing in store for her, and still more for her children, in

the prospect of her mother's recovery ; and she anxiously watched at her bed's head, unperceived by Mrs. Fitzclare, every symptom of the disorder.

After the first day, in which she had once, in the interval of her faintings, exclaimed, " Oh ! was it all a dream ? " the exhausted patient had sunk gradually into a low fever, and appeared unable or unwilling to speak.

Sophia, notwithstanding the dearest interests of her heart called her to London, was desirous to stay with her poor friend till she could see her safe from the effects of the recognition with her daughter ; but Henry, eager to obey his father's injunctions, and satisfy his own anxious solicitude, pressed her departure ; and another letter from Mr. Valacort coming in aid of his persuasions, stating the impatience of Sir Edward Arundel for the arrival of Mrs. Delmere, whom his surgeons were now willing to admit of his seeing, Mrs. Villars gave

the casting vote ; by engaging to remain at Aberystwith till the mother and daughter should be fully restored to each other's society. This removed all farther scruple, and gave Sophia wholly up to her own ardent desire for the interview. Mr. Valacort had strongly dwelt in his letter upon the necessity of preparing Mrs. Delmere for the shock that awaited her, in the entire disfigurement of Sir Edward ; but to this she did not listen for a moment. " Every scar deepens his claim upon my affection !" she cried.

The next morning was again fixed for their departure. In the evening, when she had prevailed with Helen to breathe a little fresh air, she called upon her for an elucidation of the circumstances which had so wholly misled Mrs. Villars and herself.

From these, as far as Helen could clear them up, it soon became evident that Mrs. Fitzclare's reluctance to place her husband's turpitude in its

strongest light, had induced her to suppress many particulars in her narrative which might have opened the eyes of Mrs. Delmere to the coincidence that had escaped her ; and with the whole of which it will now be proper to acquaint the reader, as briefly as may be.

CHAP. XV.

CAPTAIN Fitzclare was an Irish Roman-Catholic in the French service ; whose handsome person, plausible manners, with some creditable military distinction, had gained him an interest in the affections of Miss Carstairs which he did not deserve, for he was profligate and unprincipled.

In consenting to marry him, she had stipulated for training up any daughters she might have, in her own religious tenets : to which he had not objected: But when several years had elapsed without bringing him any other child

than Helen, who was born in the first year of their marriage, he began to entertain wonderful sensibility and fears for the welfare of this only daughter's soul ; not perhaps altogether insincere, since even in the profligacy of his life he retained the early superstitious subjection of his mind to the opinions of his church. As any affection which he might ever have had for his amiable virtuous wife was now entirely at an end ; he was not long in devising a project for rescuing himself from his matrimonial thralldom, and his child from perdition, at one stroke.

The faithful Janet was first sent out of the way to nurse a sick relation of his ; he next received a sudden call to Ireland upon business of importance, and fixed the day for his departure. On the preceding evening, having persuaded his wife to retire early, to leave him to make his arrangements for his journey, which he said would take him best part of the

night, he forthwith repaired to the nursery, took the sleeping child from the servant, whose fidelity he had bribed; conveyed it to the chaise he had in waiting—and neither husband nor child did the unhappy woman ever see more.

He left a letter, ascribing the step to his solicitude for his child's eternal salvation, which he was convinced a separation from its misguided mother could alone ensure, with a promise to restore her when her religious principles should be fixed; meanwhile she might rest satisfied of her safety, under Janet's care, whom he meant to pick up by the way. This he did, and proceeded to Ireland, where he placed his child with the worthless sister, who has been mentioned by the name of Mackay, then married to an Irishman of no better principles than Fitzclare himself. The extraordinary circumstance here was, that poor Helen should have retained the native innocence and simplicity of her mind; and

only become a romantic enthusiast. Preserved probably in a great measure by the honest integrity of her faithful attendant; for little of moral instruction could be obtained from the poor ignorant priest who had taken charge of her eternal welfare.

A small estate devolved to Fitzclare almost immediately upon his arrival in Ireland, to which was annexed the condition of changing his name; in consequence of which, Helen knew herself only by that of O'Bourne; having speedily lost the recollection of ever bearing another, and Janet being prohibited, on pain of dismissal, from acquainting her with it.

Various were the attempts the faithful creature had made to inform her unfortunate mistress of their situation; but her letters were intercepted, till she was at length made to believe that both Mrs. Fitzclare and Mrs. Carstairs were dead; and the farce was gone through

with, by her master putting both himself and Helen into mourning.

On the other hand, Mrs. Fitzclare remained ignorant of her husband's inheritance and change of name; he had resigned his commission in the French army almost immediately, and soon dropped all correspondence. His money was rapidly squandered in his profligate pleasures, and he at length came to the very common end, of being killed in a duel, the consequence of a drunken broil.

The circumstance only became known to Mrs. Fitzclare, years after it had occurred, through the channel of an old newspaper that accidentally fell into her hands, and in which happened to be specified his original name and station in the French service.

The wretched parent again made an attempt to obtain some information respecting her child, all her former ones having been baffled by his interference. But his sister, to whom she applied, had in

the interim become a widow, married Mac-kay, and removed with him to Edinburgh, taking her niece with her; consequently the letter remained unanswered, and the hapless mother continued in a state of uncertainty, that went near to unsettle her reason; the age and infirmities of Mrs. Carstairs precluding all thought either of moving or leaving her.

At length, accident so far favoured her, that the address of her letter stuck up in the window of the post office, attracted the attention of a relation of her late husband's; who having had the curiosity to make himself master of the contents, officiously took the trouble to inform her of her daughter's removal with her aunt to Edinburgh, where her beauty had captivated a young man, named Sidney, who had taken her into keeping, and carried her away with him to England, but to what part of it he did not know.

. A farther application to him from the

distracted mother obtained the intelligence, that Mr. Sidney had settled her in a cottage, in the Isle of Wight.

No consideration could now prevent the old grandmother from running all risks to accompany Mrs. Fitzclare to the Isle of Wight; and they set out accordingly, but their search was fruitless: a family of that name had inhabited a cottage in the under cliff, but had left it some time, and whither they were gone was not known; the description given, however, of the old Scotch servant, satisfied them it was the object of their anxiety who had been there; and they now determined upon taking a lodging at Southampton till they could devise what might best be done: but the expensive living had driven them farther inland; first, into the neighbourhood of Winchester, and then towards Andover, till they had finally got to the farmhouse where we originally found them.

Mrs. Fitzclare had applied to some of her Scotch connexions for advice how to proceed; they could suggest nothing better than a newspaper advertisement.

Which having proved ineffectual, probably owing to Lord Cranmore's absence from England at the time, they determined to pursue their way to Scotland by sea. There the old lady being amongst her own relations, her daughter would be more at liberty to make any necessary personal exertions for the attainment of her object; and they were accordingly on the point of setting out, when the severe gouty seizure of Mrs. Carstairs came in the way, detained them for some time longer, and gave occasion for their acquaintance with the Villars's.

When they finally reached Edinburgh, the Mackays had left it, and they could obtain no clue to guide them. Some recollected to have seen the pretty Helen; some had heard of her being

carried off by a young student ; but the aunt moved in too middling a sphere of life to have been the object of much attention ; and the heart-riven mother, still clinging to a last possible chance, had resolved to cross to Ireland before fulfilling her engagement with Mrs. Delmere, but was again stopped by the increased illness of Mrs. Carstairs.

The poor old lady's final release set her at liberty to pursue her search to Dublin. It proved as fruitless as ever, and she had embarked for England, when stress of weather drove her thus providentially on the Welch coast.

Of Mrs. Carstairs' death, and the subsequent attempt in Ireland, Mrs. Fitzclare had given notice ; but of her intended departure from thence, the intelligence had not reached Sophia, when she so unexpectedly received her in her arms.

The change of name, and Helen's ignorance of the first years of her life (for

she was scarcely five when her father carried her off) together with her entire conviction of her mother's death, sufficiently account for the variations in her own and her mother's narrative, which had kept Mrs. Villars and Sophia so completely in the dark, as to her identity with the object of Mrs. Fitzclare's research.

Little Helen Sidney's resemblance to what her mother had been at her age, as well as the name she gave herself, which seemed to stamp her mother's degradation ; produced the mixture of overcoming sensations that Mrs. Fitzclare's already exhausted frame was unable to sustain.

Helen could not detail all the circumstances as succinctly as they are here related, because she only obtained her information from Janet since the arrival of her mother at Aberystwith ; but Sophia being previously in possession of Fitzclare's story, connected it sufficiently

to induce her to spend part of the night previous to her departure in making the communication to her sister ; ardently wishing to excite such an interest as might in some degree reconcile the ill-fated Emily to the sacrifice, for which she was now called upon ; but carefully refraining from suggesting the violent measure her own romantic disposition would have prompted. Had the case been hers, she knew she should have rushed with enthusiastic devotion to the conflict, be the consequences what they might ! but Emily's mind was not formed for such heroic deeds—she must be spared—she would sink under the trial ; it was important, therefore, to suppress every allusion to the benefit that might accrue to Mrs. Villars and Helen from her presence, and with a caution not very usual to Sophia, the letter was worded.

But Emily was not the person to spare herself. Far other motives ! would have impelled *her* instantly to take the very

step that despair would have suggested to Sophia. She saw the great use she might be of at Aberystwith, and was thoroughly aware, from the tenor of Lord Cranmore's letter, of the honourable part he was about to act; but she was withheld by the reflection, that her presence might increase his struggles. She believed she knew what she herself could bear, under the consciousness of performing a duty; she knew not so well what his firmness might be: there was, moreover, an appearance of indelicacy, in forcing herself into his presence. She determined to remain where she was.

Sophia and Henry had, as they intended, taken the wings of the morning; and spurred on by her impatience, they sped their way, not meaning to stop night or day, till they should reach Stanhope Street. As they drew up to Chapel House to change horses, their servant came to the chaise door with a scared look, and said he had seen a servant of

Lord Cranmore's in the inn-yard, who told him his Lord had been dangerously hurt by an overturn, and was confined to his bed in that house.

It may be imagined that Henry lost not a moment in jumping out of the chaise, and seeking more particular information. He learnt that Lord Cranmore was travelling towards Wales with all the speed four horses could lend, when the axle-tree of the carriage gave way, with a violence so sudden, as to have caused a contusion on Lord Cranmore's head that had produced insensibility; the nearest medical assistance had been obtained, with all possible speed, and the most effectual remedies applied, but hitherto without success; he remained insensible.

Henry's alarm at this account was so strongly pictured in his countenance, as instantly to determine Sophia to insist upon leaving him there, to watch over Lord Cranmore, and proceed to London

by herself. Friendship at this moment silencing every other consideration, he agreed to let his sister proceed without him, and remain by his friend's bedside, to secure every possible care being taken; greatly fearing, from the appearance of the contusion, and the continued stupor, that all might prove fruitless. He only entreated his sister to stop in Oxford, till she could dispatch the best physician from thence, which she accordingly did.

Henry's first business was to inform Colonel Maxwell of this misfortune; he then wrote to Miss Maxwell likewise; begging her to impart so much as she might judge prudent, to Emily, of what had happened; scarcely doubting, but that worse must follow, for which he wished her to be prepared.

With every possible caution, Miss Maxwell proceeded in the painful disclosure. Emily could not for a moment be deceived as to the extent of the danger; she well knew it was not a trifling

hurt that her brother would so carefully have imparted. Her grief—her feelings may be imagined, far more easily than the surprising strength of mind with which, after the first forty-eight hours, she turned her thoughts to the expediency of flying to the succour of Helen, lest the worst should take place. The continuance of the stupor which Henry's subsequent letter acknowledged ; and the certainty derived from that circumstance of the length of time, at best, that must elapse before Lord Cranmore could be suffered to move, set aside all apprehension of meeting him, and she resolutely made up her mind to the journey.

Miss Maxwell, sensible of the benefit of exertion in grief so deep as that which had now taken possession of her friend, encouraged the plan, as well by undertaking to solicit Mr. Villars's consent to his daughter's proposal, as by engaging to take her place in nursing his gout.

His acquiescence was more ready than had been expected ; as his resentment for the supposed ill-treatment of Emily made the apprehension of Lord Crammore's death sit very light upon his own mind, he did not exactly estimate her sufferings what they actually were ; and at the time of Miss Maxwell's application to him, his attention being moreover wholly engrossed by an able pamphlet on the state of the nation, he caught no more of her explanation, than that Mrs. Villars wanted her daughter at Aberystwith, which, he said, " of course she ought immediately to comply with ; and if she would delay her departure for a few hours, he should have gone through the pamphlet, and she might take it with her for her mother's perusal, as it would be highly pleasing to her, to see how many of the arguments were exactly what she had so frequently heard him state." Miss Maxwell, satisfied with having so readily obtained his consent,

neither stopped to clear up Emily's motives, nor yet to remind him how small a share the subject of politics occupied in Mrs. Villars's thoughts, but sent off without loss of time for Patty Benson to accompany Emily ; and a very few hours saw her on her road to Wales.

CHAP. XVI.

LEAVE we the piously resigned though deeply sorrowing Emily, to win her weary way; while we attend the rapid course of Sophia : who, on her arrival in Stanhope Street found herself so nearly exhausted with fatigue and anxiety, as to be wholly unfit to see the object of her ardent solicitude that evening. At least Mrs. Valacort so strongly urged this plea, as to bear down all opposition; secretly impelled by her sense of the importance of preparing her niece as much as possible for the trying spectacle she was about to witness.

Sophia believed herself prepared.

But far short indeed, did her expectation fall of the pallid, emaciated powerless figure, she next morning saw, stretched upon his sofa, his face half concealed by the bandages, and with scarcely sufficient strength to raise his languid head from the cushions, in acknowledgment of her presence.

She stood transfixed.

He clasped his raised hands in testimony of his joy on beholding her, and a beam of pleasure lighted up his eyes as they rested on her countenance ; but he could not immediately speak.

“ Merciful God ! ” she exclaimed ; “ And is this my doing ? ” gazing upon him in uncontroled emotion.

“ Oh no !—no—it was my zeal to deserve the blessing—and this condescension— ”

He spoke with difficulty and somewhat inarticulately : she interrupted him—

“ O ! do not miscall it condescension !

Mr. Valacort was finally induced to undertake obtaining the special licence, which should, on the following morning; empower her to establish herself head nurse, and secure to this victim of her wrong-headedness all those minor comforts and reliefs at least, which female heads and hands are alone competent to administer.

The evening scene was a repetition of the disinterested contest of the morning. Sir Edward, renovated and soothed by sentiments so congenial to the most exalted idea he had formed of the object of his unbounded adoration, yet feared that excess of compassion and self-reproach might at this moment prompt a sacrifice she would afterwards repent; and with a generosity worthy of her own, he resisted securing to himself the only happiness for which he had any wish to live.

But he yet knew not Sophia. Compassion and self-reproach, she assuredly experienced in no common degree; but

the predominating feeling of her mind was the enthusiastic admiration he had excited in it, by his self-denying forbearance in regard to Patty ; when one word of explanation to open her eyes to the profligacy of Delmere would have ensured him the attainment of all his wishes. Her heart was from the moment of that discovery, wedded to his by ties that his death only could have prevented her from ratifying.

And the next morning's sun rose upon the accomplishment of their union, under circumstances as extraordinary as the extraordinary beings who contracted it.

In the course of the day, Lady Arundel's apartment in Brook Street was fitted up with all the elegance and splendour that Lord Leonard Ormsby's taste could impart ; for he had been commissioned to exert it without limitation, and every one knows how abundantly London furnishes the means. But what were splendour and elegance to her !

attendance upon his still unconscious friend.

Emily took no rest upon her road ; and completed her journey before Miss Maxwell's letter arrived to inform Mrs. Villars of its having been undertaken.

Astonishment is too feeble a word to convey any idea of the mixed distressing sensations with which Mrs. Villars beheld her darling Emily alight from her chaise, with that sad look of heartfelt grief which pervaded every feature.

" Merciful heaven, my child !" she exclaimed ; " what can have prompted your taking this trying journey ?"

" I could not bear to leave you alone, dearest mother, to such a fearful variety of care as the unhappy Helen and Mrs. Fitzclare must require."

" Surely, surely, *you* are unfit, Emily, for what you are undertaking—you seem half dead with fatigue already."

She was, in fact, scarce able to support

herself when she alighted. "A little rest will soon recover me," she said; "I could not remain inactive in the tortured state of my mind."

Mrs. Villars, unwilling to let her exhaust herself by farther conversation, led the way to Sophia's apartment, of which she put her in possession, with a strong injunction to Patty to let nothing disturb her there before the next morning; determining at the same time, to defer the communication of her arrival to Helen, till the following day. Very apprehensive of the effect the news would produce, she determined to take the breaking of it upon herself.

But 'prudence proposes, and circumstance disposes.'

Helen, whose unceasing attendance in her mother's chamber seemed effectually to secure her against hearing of an event so agitating, happened to be the first person informed of it. Janet's curiosity, excited by the arrival of the

chaise, brought her within reach of the servant's voice, as he uttered an exclamation of surprise on beholding his young lady step out of it. It may naturally be supposed that the attached old woman's feelings were not likely to be very tender towards any of the Villars family, who she considered as the destroyers of her dear bairn's fame, as well as closing her every prospect of happiness in this world. She had not, however, resisted the softening influence of Mrs. Villars and Mrs. Delmere's excessive kindness to Helen; and could find in her heart to wish well to them, in any way that was unconnected with her mistress; but for Emily, she treasured up undiminished her entire stock of wrath and hatred. Some rumours had found their way to her of an expectation of Lord Cranmore's arrival, from which she had formed hopes—although she had preserved a cautious silence in the fear of agitating Helen; but the unlooked-for appearance of Miss

Villars herself, come, as she supposed, to impede whatever better intentions his Lordship might be cherishing, now raised up such a storm of indignation in her breast, as wholly overpowered every other consideration; and running straight to her lady, she burst forth in all the bitterness of her spirit to tell her the news, and reprobate "the cruelty and wickedness of yon witch, just come to cast her evil eye upon him!"

Helen, whose enthusiasm for every part of the Villars family, was worked up to its highest pitch, was too much provoked at Janet's invectives, to attend to her allusion respecting Lord Cranmore's arrival, and angrily imposed silence upon her enraged informant, expressing at the same time her impatience for an interview.

Janet, somewhat sulkily, withdrew—the day passed on, and no notice whatever was taken of the subject that filled Helen's thoughts. It now occurred to

her, that the communication might be withheld from motives of delicacy; for it has been seen, that however untutored her mind, generosity and delicacy were its prevailing features; and she could perfectly understand what she had so undeviatingly (according to her own romantic conceptions) adhered to. She therefore determined to seek without farther loss of time, what did not seem to be so soon intended to be offered, and on leaving her mother's apartment, she repaired to Mrs. Villars.

“ You fear to impart your happiness in the sight of your daughter to me, Mrs. Villars,” she began; “ do you think me so ungrateful, that you can have any feelings, in which I will not take a share?”

Mrs. Villars, taken by surprise, was for a moment rather embarrassed. Emily's motives for coming could not be touched upon; Helen was ignorant both of Lord Cranmore's being on his

way to her, and of his accident; the precipitation with which he had set out having prevented his writing: and those so deeply interested in his intentions, having as yet only presumption to go upon, could not allow themselves to awaken hopes, which might eventually prove fallacious, nor were they willing to excite an alarm for his safety that would so greatly distress her; perfect silence had therefore been preserved till circumstances should farther develop themselves.

Mrs. Villars, with a little hesitation, said, "Believe me, I do ample justice both to your feelings and your generosity; but I conceive this meeting may be so very trying, I could gladly have spared it."

"Do you think," she interrupted, "after so many years of forbearance voluntarily imposed upon myself, I will shrink now and become selfish? no indeed—I grieve as much as ever to be

deed very good in Miss Villars to interest herself in my children !” she replied.

Emily regaining some degree of self-possession, said, “ Their appearance must interest any one that sees them ; but more particularly me, Mrs. Sidney.”

“ O Miss Villars ! with what joy I’ll sink to rest, if I may hope for your goodness to them, when I am out of the way.”

“ I shall be far more gratified, by any kindness I may have the means of showing them, during your lifetime,” returned Emily, with great warmth.

“ O Miss Villars ! you have a heavenly mind joined to every thing else that can make *him* happy. O, that I was but out of the way !” she exclaimed with fervour.

“ You must not encourage such a wish, Mrs. Sidney ! whatever deprivation and suffering you have imposed upon yourself, you owe the utmost care of your health to your lovely children.”

The distress of this interview was considerably increased to Emily by the fear of betraying what she knew of Lord Cranmore.

“ You are all sweetness !” cried Helen, “ I had a dread of your hating the very sight of me, who stand between you and such great happiness as I now find I must do, whether I will or no.”

“ Indeed, Mrs. Sidney, that fear much more properly belongs to me, who have had the misfortune to draw away affections, so justly your due.”

“ O no !—O no !” exclaimed the enthusiastic Helen ; “ I never was worthy of such superhuman excellence as his—he felt that long—long before ever he knew you.”

“ The conviction that your separation has not originated with me, is indeed necessary to the recovery of my peace,” returned Emily ; “ but be assured, that I shall no longer be the means of pro-

wear a more favourable aspect, it was evident that much time must elapse ere he could be allowed to travel ; and while she could be secure from his arrival, Emily felt it a relief to employ herself in some way that was connected with him ; either in taking charge of the little Helen (together with Agatha) while the mother's assiduity in Mrs. Fitzclare's apartment kept her away from the task for which she was far less qualified ; or by preparing Helen's own mind, when they were together, for bearing with equanimity whatever change of situation heaven might have in store for her ; apprehending the effects on her weak frame of too sudden a joyful revulsion ; for it now appeared clearly from Lord Leonard's communication to Colonel Maxwell, that his brother had set out with the full intention of immediately making every possible reparation to his wife and children for the long disgrace he had

so unwittingly suffered to rest upon them.

And here may be the best opportunity for stating the true cause of an ignorance which has not hitherto been fully explained.

CHAP. XVII.

LORD Cranmore (then called Sidney, which name he had taken for an estate left him by a distant relation) lodged in the house of Mackay, during his studentship at Edinburgh, where Helen's beauty and simplicity could not but attract his notice ; he paid her only such attentions however, as his natural politeness might prompt ; but the kind-heartedness which ever marked his manner when at ease, was quickly construed by the artless romantic girl, into particular feeling for her, and she soon repaid it with the most fervent and grateful affection.

It did not immediately betray itself so as to attract the attention of Sidney. The artful unprincipled aunt was more sharp-sighted; Helen's improving beauty had long fed her hopes with the prospect of being in some way or other turned to good account; she saw Sidney was not likely to be easily led astray; she saw too, that Helen was not overlooked by him, and she trusted to time for bringing about some circumstance of which advantage might be taken; but deemed it expedient in the first instance to curb Helen's too natural display of her feelings; fearing that if Sidney took the alarm he might withdraw from the snare ere his own sensibility should be sufficiently awakened. By these means she did succeed in imperceptibly giving Helen a stronger hold upon his affections, than he himself at all suspected.

He returned to his lodgings after the long vacation unconscious of the encreasing dangers that awaited him. He was

struck with the improvement in her person; could not remain unmoved by the uncontrolled expressions of her delight on again beholding him, and became aware that he was exposing himself to considerable hazard in remaining where he was. Sidney was exactly at the age when the passions are strongest, and reason most easily set aside; nevertheless he virtuously resolved, to fly from what might be too powerful a trial, and he informed his hosts that he should remove next quarter into lodgings more at hand to the colleges.

Mrs. Mackay now perceived there was no time to be lost, and with her husband's assistance she laid her plan. Sidney was fond of playing at goff, it is severe exercise; his health being somewhat delicate he was apt to be exceedingly overpowered by the fatigue of it, and she usually persuaded him to take something of more strength to recover him, than his habitual spare living inclined him to; it was

agreed between them to make use of the first opportunity of drugging his potion, so as to produce inebriety, and seize upon that moment for the transaction which has already been mentioned ; Helen was led to believe it was intended only in playfulness.

The plan succeeded to their utmost wish. It now remained to tutor Helen to change her mode of conduct, and give a loose to the fondness she had before been admonished to repress ; alas ! to the poor innocent victim, this was far the easier lesson. She was told that she was in deed and in truth his wife, though it might not immediately suit him to acknowledge her ; and she by degrees came to feel her conscience securely lulled to rest in the entire reliance on her aunt's sanction. Poor Janet, on whom Helen imposed the strongest oath of secrecy the moment she had fully understood her serious claims, also withheld her former admonitions, being satisfied that

the ceremony was perfectly lawful and binding; the hapless girl therefore no longer contended with her love, and such frequent opportunity was taken of throwing her into Sidney's way, as in an evil hour finally overpowered his better resolves; and the unfortunate connexion was formed from which he had determined with such heroical violence to his own feelings to save them both.

Passion now for a time took entire possession of him; the 'compunctious visitings,' that occasionally obtruded themselves, were in a great measure silenced by his erroneous estimate of Helen's character; frankly and unreservedly as she had given herself up to his love, he could consider her in little better light than a wanton, who had been instructed to ensnare him; his entire unconsciousness of what had passed, and Helen's disinterested resolution never to avail herself of it, concurred to make him place to the account of levity, what only

originated in ignorance, innocence, and a totally unenlightened mind, artfully worked upon.

But Sidney could not long continue satisfied to pursue this disgraceful course, however passionately he felt attached to Helen. He again formed the determination at the ensuing vacation to put an end to it, and obtain of his father to let him return no more to Edinburgh, satisfying himself that a handsome provision for her future subsistence was all the compensation required at his hands. But Helen was now unknown to herself in a situation to urge stronger claims. Never was astonishment greater than her's, when the information was imparted to her by Mrs. Mackay: her delight however, equalled it—the thought of becoming a mother to Sidney's child, was ecstasy.

In Sidney, new feelings were also called up, to which his heart fondly throbbed; but soon and cruelly were these sen-

sations crushed by the recollection of the degraded state in which the hapless innocent would see the light. Yet could he not for an instant turn to the idea of introducing unto his family, such a person as with all her love to him he believed Helen to be. Her beauty—her artlessness, and her fondness, were all the attractions he discovered in her; not one of these could avail with his parents—and the thoughtless levity with which she seemed to have given way to her passion, set a stamp upon her that entirely separated the feeling of esteem from those she had inspired.

Painful as was the effort, he therefore resolutely adhered to a final separation; but desirous to spare as much of the distress as possible, both to himself and her, he anticipated the day of his departure, having made his preparations with a degree of caution that he hoped might have averted all suspicion of his intentions.

There were, however, more experienced

and watchful eyes intent upon his motions, than those of the simple Helen ; the very circumstance of secrecy suggested to the Mackays what he had in view ; and with secrecy more guarded than his own, the wily aunt instilled such fears of losing him, into her niece's mind, on the very evening prior to his departure, if she suffered him to go without her ; that she was worked up to the desperate step of setting out some hours before him with Janet, and way-laying him on his road. .

For *this* indeed, he was wholly unprepared — and while with a heart still bleeding from the virtuous effort he had made, he was contemplating the wretchedness his poor girl would experience on finding him gone—she burst upon him at his inn, wildly screaming, “ Oh Sidney ! could you think of leaving me so ? — never — never will I part from you ! ” and fell in violent hysterics upon his breast. . The conflict was more than he had power to withstand ; and after some

faint attempt at expostulation, to which she was resolutely deaf, he gave way.

Helen's excessive happiness, in having recovered him, now for a time renewed the intoxication of passion in him, and the birth of the little girl strengthened the tie; but poor Helen's mind was not calculated to retain the conquest her charms had made; as passion subsided, reason and principle resumed their empire over Sidney, and many months before the birth of the boy, he had undertaken to reconcile her upon virtuous and religious grounds to their separation. Helen, however, was not in a state to understand his arguments: entirely absorbed in the consciousness that he was ceasing to love her, and strengthening herself in the generous determination of refraining from urging her claim, she seemed to him wholly impervious to all sense of right; and to all appearance only instinctively acting by him and his child as feeling prompted, without a thought in her mind of any higher motive of conduct.

The old Scotch woman was ready to go out of her senses at the vow of secrecy Helen had exacted from her, when she found her bairn deserted ; but no persuasions she could offer were of any avail ; and when she had appealed to Mrs. Mackay by letter for her interference, the artful woman preserved a determined silence to her application : little concerned for the reputation of her niece, so that she were fairly rid of her, and willing moreover to lie by for the opportunity which she foresaw might occur of squeezing a sum of money from Sidney to purchase her secrecy.

From this state of the case, it appears that the narrative Lord Cranmore had to impart to Mrs. Villars, could place Helen in no better light in *her* eyes than that of a fond wanton who had seduced the young student ; and therefore could have no claims upon him whatever, beyond a liberal provision for herself and children.

CHAP. XVIII.

Emily's desire to protract her stay at Aberystwith to the last moment, was encreased by her affectionate solicitude for Mrs. Fitzclare: she wished to be the means of facilitating the recognition between the mother and daughter; having observed that as Helen perceived her mother's returning sense and strength likely to bring forward the critical hour, she seemed to shrink from it as scarce knowing whether to wish or fear it most.

Mrs. Villars had intended to take

upon herself the delicate business of preparing the poor invalid for the important discovery, willing to spare Emily all unnecessary exertions; but finding her urgent for the task she gave way, upon the farther consideration that whatever served to draw her thoughts out of their daily course, might prove a salutary relief.

Within the last twenty-four hours, Mrs. Fitzclare had shewn an attention to what was passing about her, that made it expedient, for both Helen and Janet to be kept out of her room, till it should be deemed safe to make some preparatory opening to the joyful tidings in store for her.

“ Was it all a dream !” were the only words she had yet uttered, as if debating with herself; till on Mrs. Villars one day approaching the bed, she had at length ejaculated ! “ Kind Mrs. Villars ! — what trouble I give ! — may I not see dear Mrs. Delmere ?”

She was then informed that Mrs. Delmere had been called away, and Emily taken her place; who would gladly come to her bedside, provided she did not exhaust herself by conversation, which was as yet prohibited.

This being readily agreed to, Emily was introduced, and after the expression of mutual satisfaction in the meeting, fetched her work, and made her little establishment by the bedside.

After a considerable length of silence on both sides, Mrs. Fitzclare resumed her ejaculation, "Oh! could it be all a dream?"

"Do you mind dreams?" Emily asked.

"This was so very vivid—she did seem to stand before me."

"Who?"

"My poor lost child."

"As she was when you lost her?"

"Alas yes!—I could not know her now," she added, after a pause.

"What would now be her age?"

"Just twenty-four."

Emily did not venture farther—she resumed her work. Mrs. Fitzclare after a little time, began again.

"It is very strange, it was so vivid—it is upon my mind like the reality—her very self!"

"I think," said Emily, who perceived that the emotion of speaking upon the subject began to agitate her, "you are venturing upon too much exertion—this subject is too interesting."

"I could wish to tell you what I saw."

"Not now—you have tried your strength enough for the present."

"It would greatly relieve me."

"We will consult our doctor upon it then; you know I only act under permission."

A heavy sigh was all the answer; and in the afternoon the doctor gave greater liberty of speech.

Mrs. Fitzclare instantly reverted to her dream, and related with much emotion

her meeting with the little Helen; describing very minutely the appearance of the child, and the manner of their meeting, though with very confused recollection of the preceding circumstances.

“It is singular certainly,” said Emily, “the very image?”

“O so perfect!—so living!—what could it be?”

Emily was silent.

“Do you think that dreams ever have meaning? are they sent us?” continued Mrs. Fitzclare.

“I cannot tell—they have sometimes a strange coincidence with truth which we can hardly explain.”

“There!” said Mrs. Fitzclare, as she lay with her eyes closed, and her hand drawn over them, “I see her now!”

“I think,” replied Emily hesitatingly, “if the image is pleasing to you, you need not endeavour to banish it from your thoughts.”

“Do you think, Miss Villars,” she said

again, after a pause, "it can have meaning?"

"I do not know," Emily answered, "why you should not hope so; I would encourage you to hope."

"Would you?" she returned somewhat hastily, "Ah I dare not—I dare not hope."

A pause ensued; after which Emily resumed, "When you are sufficiently recovered not to fear the effects of the agitation, that must always follow so interesting a subject, I shall beg you to give me the particulars of your vain search after your daughter."

"They will soon be told—I could learn no trace at all after she left the Isle of Wight; but too surely I think, if I was now to find her, when I know the life of dishonour she did lead, it would kill me quite."

"Was it not from Edinburgh she originally went with Mr. Sidney?"

"O too sure it was!"

“ Did it never strike you, in reflecting upon how little is required to give validity to a Scotch marriage, that something may have passed that could not be publicly known, to authorise her considering herself as his wife?”

“ O the blessing of heaven rest upon you for that thought!—what hope you open to my mind by such a possibility! you are my good angel for the bare suggestion—any thing but her fall from virtue I could bear—” and the violent flushing of her countenance showed the agitation of her frame.

Emily feared to go any farther. “ I must not let you agitate yourself,” she said, and turned the conversation.

But the blessed idea had poured balm into the poor mother’s wounded mind; and the following day found her stronger. She eagerly returned to the subject.

“ If I could know she lived innocent, I should feel such consolation for her death.”

“ I really see great reason for such a

hope; and by means of Colonel Maxwell's Scotch connexions, I flatter myself some elucidation of the fact might be obtained."

Starting up in her bed, and fixing a penetrating look upon Emily's face, she exclaimed, "O Miss Villars! you do know something!"

"I certainly know that Colonel Maxwell thinks he may be able to come at something decisive respecting a private marriage."

"Oh blessings! blessings on him!—on you!—oh what shall I say?" a sudden burst of tears long impeded her utterance. "It is impossible to tell what that relief would be to me!" she at length added.

"I cannot divest myself of the idea," Emily resumed, "that your solicitude on that head will be entirely set at rest."

Then after another considerable pause, during which the motion of Mrs. Fitzclare's lips evidently showed her to be

praying, Emily added, " You seem to consider your daughter's death as certain—have you ever received any such intimation in your researches?"

" No, assuredly I have not—but—but I think is impossible, if she lives I should not have been able to discover some trace somewhere—do you think otherwise?"

Finding she did not immediately answer, with encreased and almost convulsive eagerness, she cried, " O say!—is it possible you can think otherwise?—O such hope would drive away my senses!—speak, dear Miss Villars!—for pity speak!"

With considerable hesitation, Emily answered, " I really can see no grounds for assuming the fact of her death."

The agitation of the invalid now became so alarming, that quieting drops were recurred to; and Emily conceiving that she would recover her calmness more speedily for being left alone; went in

search of her mother to impart what had passed, and consult how much farther she might venture to go in the next conversation; for it became important to hurry the disclosure as much as could be done with safety, from the effects upon poor Helen of the hopes and fears to which she was now a prey; too long accustomed to give way to impulse to find it easy to substitute a better guide, she had appeared nearly in a state of derangement, from the first moment of Emily's undertaking this arduous task. Her uncontrollable impatience was such, that Mrs. Villars scarcely dared trust her out of her sight, lest she should steal into the sick chamber, in defiance of the injunctions laid upon her, to get a glimpse of her mother through the curtains when she could think her dozing.

She had actually been upon the watch for such an opportunity; and when at her return from having attended the children's dinner, she heard the voices of

Mrs. Villars, and Emily in the parlour; concluding her mother to be asleep, she instantly seized the moment of indulging her imprudent wish, and on tiptoe stole to the foot of the bed.

As she gently drew the curtain aside, Mrs. Fitzclare, supposing it to be Emily, exclaimed with earnestness, "I am so much better—O tell me again, if it is possible, you think, my dear, my long lost child is good and alive—O it would be happiness too great!"

Wholly unprepared for these words, Helen threw herself upon the bed, screaming wildly, "My mother!—my dearest mother! can you forgive?"—

Mrs. Fitzclare's convulsive inarticulate sobs, as she sunk back exhausted on her pillow, after having made an ineffectual attempt to clasp her daughter in her arms, now terrified the impetuous Helen into the belief that she had destroyed her mother; and springing up she ran distractedly about the room, wringing her

hands, and screaming, "I have killed her! —I have killed her!"

This uproar soon brought Mrs. Villars and Emily to their succour. Mrs. Villars laid hold of Helen, who seemed really beside herself, and authoritatively imposing silence, led her away, leaving the mother to Emily.

"It was her ghost I did try to embrace — it has vanished — wretched — wretched end of all my hopes!" Mrs. Fitzclare faintly murmured.

"You are giving way to vain imaginations, my dear Mrs. Fitzclare," Emily said soothingly, "pray try to compose yourself!"

"Oh! it was this time no imagination — you could not see."

"Yes, I did see the cause of your agitation, and if you will endeavour to be calm, I will explain—"

"I cannot be calm till I know—"

"I left you dozing, and your mind dwelling upon our conversation."

“ I never was more wide awake—I saw—I heard the words, ‘ my mother,’ ” her emotion amounted almost to agony as she spoke.

Emily judged the reality could scarcely be more trying than her present situation, and said gently, “ You are yet so feeble, I am even afraid of the effects of joy or I—”

“ She is!—she is found!” wildly interrupted the mother, “ it was—it was herself!—oh my merciful God! accept—accept,—” and with incredible strength raising herself, and turning upon her knees, she ejaculated inarticulate thanksgivings: “ And now—oh now let my eyes rest upon her face!—I will be calm—indeed I will!”

“ We must take some minutes to calm *her*,” replied Emily, “ before we can venture to bring you together; for she has not been well, and is not strong, and I love her too well to risk her health any more than yours.”

“ *You* love her, Miss Villars!—then I must be sure she is good.” And a flood of tenderness broke from the eyes of the agitated mother, which relieved Emily from all apprehension of the effects of the meeting upon her; leaving her therefore to indulge her tears, she went to assist in pacifying Helen.

In vain had Mrs. Villars been making the attempt; never had this creature of uncontrolled feelings, been less capable of hearing reason; the conflict of contending emotions swelled her heart almost to bursting; she flew distractedly to Emily as she entered the room; “not another minute could she exist,” she said, “without being acknowledged and forgiven.”

“You shall instantly be both,” cried Emily; “I make but one condition—that you do not at present discover to your still weak and suffering mother, that *I* am the person—that it was *my* hand—

that Lord Cranmore sought," faltered Emily, "promise me this!"

"Any thing—every thing, I promise," cried the impatient Helen; "take me but to her to be forgiven;" and she rushed impetuously forward.

Emily opened the door of the sick room, and stayed but at it till she was satisfied from the words she heard them both distinctly articulate, that the senses of neither were overpowered by their strong emotion.

Of scenes such as these, delineation must fall so short, the attempt were vain.

CHAP. XLX.

HELLEN no sooner recovered the power of speaking coherently, than wholly unconscious of what in her extreme agitation she had engaged to suppress, she instantly informed her mother of Emily's unexampled conduct, under their relative trying circumstances; and poignantly did Mrs. Fitzclare feel the cruel situation in which her daughter must now place the friend, and the family, to whom she owed so much.

When Emily thought she had allowed sufficient time for the first effusions of tenderness to have in some degree sub-

sided, she felt eager to contemplate the happiness she had brought about. But instead of it, she met the sad surprise of finding the poor invalid in a paroxysm of grief that seemed quite unaccountable, till Helen exclaimed, "It is her love—her obligations to you, Miss Villars, that make her so unhappy—she cannot bear *me* to stand in the way of *your* happiness."

"Good heavens! Mrs. Sidney, did you not promise me to be silent on that head?"

"No never—when?—did you think it possible gratitude could be silent?—I should tell it the whole earth!"

In vain did Emily endeavour to bring to her recollection what had passed. She knew nothing of any such promise, and would not have made it, if she had. In short, Helen was neither then, nor now in a state of mind to know what she said or did; she could only feel.

As the mischief was done, nothing remained but for Emily to exert her utmost

powers of persuasion to soothe Mrs. Fitzclare's regrets. She stated in the strongest terms the impossibility of her ever having enjoyed any thing like happiness on the discovery that must finally have come to light. She then endeavoured to draw off Mrs. Fitzclare's thoughts, by adverting to the new objects of interest still in store for her ; and quickly agreed to Janet's introduction ; only reserving the sight of the children to the next day ; fearing such a succession of emotions, however pleasurable, in her debilitated state. But joy can only kill by its suddenness, and this Emily's judicious preparation had in a great measure saved ; though the exhaustion that followed, both in mother and daughter, was alarming. Mrs. Villars proposed Helen's being laid upon a couch by Mrs. Fitzclare's bed-side full in her sight, with Janet to watch over them both, and preclude all further conversation between them for the night. It did not bring sleep upon its wings ;

their nerves were too strongly irritated to expect it; but it did produce a repose of mind sufficiently salutary to remove all objection to the introduction of the children the following morning.

That day was one of exquisite enjoyment and uninterrupted explanations between the long separated, long suffering relations. Every succeeding hour increased their mutual confidence. Mrs. Fitzclare's convalescent state still kept the room in a sort of twilight that did not reveal Helen's emaciated form fully to her observation, and the deceptive brilliancy of her eye and cheek averted all suspicion of her alarming disorder.

Bolstered up in her arm-chair, with her daughter's hand in hers—her two lovely grand-children at her feet, staring up in her face with pretty wonder—Agatha, who had at length gained access to her 'dear Fitz,' watching her every look to see what she could fetch or do for her—the happy invalid looked around

and around her, with sensations of bliss at times too great for utterance. It was only when her eye fell upon Emily's pale meek and resigned countenance, that a momentary expression of anguish betrayed her keen sense of the price at which all this happiness was to be retained.

No sooner did Emily become sensible of this, than she determined upon her own immediate return to the Priory; satisfied with the part she had so successfully taken, yet grieving to think that her presence should be a drawback upon the felicity she had been so eager to promote. Such daily accounts were now however received of the gradually progressive state of Lord Cranmore's recovery, as at least removed *one* heavy load of anguish from her mind.

On the evening previous to the day of her intended departure, Colonel Maxwell called on Mrs. Villars, with a letter from Lord Leonard Ormsby, enclosing

one of a very few lines from Lord Cranmore to Helen, preparatory to their meeting, which might now, he said, shortly be expected to take place; and he trusted to the Colonel's good judgment for not delivering it in so abrupt a way as might prove too trying for her weak state.

"Emily has just been fixing her departure for to-morrow," said Mrs. Villars, "but this will detain her another day; I think she will not suffer this to go through any other hands than hers."

"Do you not fear, Mrs. Villars, that she is carrying this matter too far? this species of self-immolation is almost too much for human nature."

"The self-immolation has been, on Helen's part, to a degree that I could not have conceived to exist in human nature. Emily's heroism is founded on a principle that will never fail to afford the necessary support."

"And yet you see how severe the

conflict!—it goes to my very soul to mark her fading cheek, her sinking eye.”

“I know my Emily: she will in time recover her tranquillity. It could not be expected she should relinquish such happiness as she had in prospect, without deeply feeling what she was to forego: that could only have arisen from insensibility; however it is assuredly desirable to put as speedy an end as may be to these struggles. Absence will contribute to strengthen her mind; on no account must a meeting with Lord Cranmore be risked; *that* might indeed be fatal to the fortitude of both. I shall wish after this last effort to attend Emily home myself, now that Mrs. Fitzclare’s recovery is making the rapid strides it has done within these last few days.”

“Aye, take her off for mercy’s sake! by all that’s good, I have not had a moment’s peace since the angelic creature came to this place. You may confidently

rely upon my watching over the interesting beings you leave here, till all is brought to the desired conclusion."

Emily came into the room, as Colonel Maxwell was leaving it; the unusually anxious expression of his countenance struck her, and she eagerly inquired of her mother what it meant?

"Nothing, but what is perfectly satisfactory, as to the progress of Lord Cranmore's recovery," said Mrs. Villars, as she put a letter from Henry, which the packet had also contained, into her daughter's hand.

"Thank heaven!" she cried, and after a moment's pause, she added, "probably then his arrival may be near at hand! I could wish to prepare Helen for that before I go; though it should occasion the delay of another day."

In attempting to read her brother's letter, her eyes were suffused with tears that made it impossible to get on. "Give way to them, my dearest child," said

Mrs. Villars, seeing them trickle upon the paper, "do not struggle against feelings so very natural, and which must have vent."

She threw herself into her mother's arms, and relieved her full and severely tried heart, by weeping for a long time uncontrollably upon her shoulder. "I feel ashamed of my weakness, dearest mother," she at length said, "but bear with me!—I shall conquer it."

I have no doubt you will in time," was the reply, "but do not aim at too much! —I would not have you a stoic; your present heroism would lose half its value, if robbed of the charm of sensibility; it is the self-controul that regulates, without deadening it, that is the perfection of Christian virtue.

When Emily recovered sufficient composure to attend to the contents of her brother's letter, she found it replete with affectionate good sense; forcibly exculpating Lord Cranmore, and highly ex-

tolling his present line of conduct, which he said he firmly believed it was the desire to act up to Emily's opinion of him that enabled him to pursue. Henry stated, that his Lordship being now in a state to converse upon the trying topic; he had said, he should not write to Miss Villars as he had first intended; he felt himself no longer at liberty to do so, he was *a married man*; he only requested of her brother to assure her, she should never have cause to blush for the preference with which she had once deigned to honour him.

In this determination, and this assurance, Emily found all the delicacy and propriety that had marked every step of her acquaintance with Lord Cranmore; and with renewed courage from these sympathetic soothings of her brother's and her mother's, she proceeded upon her arduous task the following morning; having received from the hands of Mrs. Villars the important letter.

She found Helen in tears, deploring

their intended departure ; as yet she felt to hold more to Mrs. Villars than to her newly found mother. " What will become of me," she exclaimed, " when you all leave me ? I am now so conscious I cannot guide myself."

" Surely you have no cause for fear with such a mother to advise."

" Don't think I am insensible to the blessing of finding her ; but I am conscience-struck before her ; I have tinged her cheek with shame, I dare hardly look up when she caresses me ; I cannot hope for such indulgence from her as you and Mrs. Villars and Mrs. Delmere have shown."

" You may rely on every thing that is indulgent, good and kind from her ; but, dear Helen, since you allow me to call you so, you may now also hope in every way for brighter prospects."

" You make me happy indeed when you call me, Helen ; I think you love me then ; that's the only brightner of my

prospects—to think when I am gone, your love for me shall shew itself to my poor children,” again melting into tears.

“I have reason to think there are brighter prospects in store for you on this side the grave!”

“Miss Villars!” she cried, starting at the suggestion of her own mind, “I know you are capable of the most exalted generosity; but do not carry it so far as to use your influence to make him unhappy! I would not bear to be his acknowledged wife at such an expense.”

“Be assured your delicacy has nothing to apprehend from any interference of mine. Lord Cranmore is not the man I take him for, if he waited any suggestion from me to do you justice.”

Helen’s agitation became extreme; she did not speak.

Emily resumed, “Knowing, as he must do, your claims—”

“O!” she interrupted, “I should not have acknowledged—I did wrong to tell

him the truth ; I should only have confessed to Mrs. Villars, to save *you* from being involved."

" Dear Helen ! what do you mean ? ought the truth ever to be withheld when called for ? my brother Henry says, Lord Cranmore was wholly ignorant till—"

" Your brother !—does he know ?—has he seen ?—O ! what has passed ?—tell me for pity's sake !" almost inarticulate with emotion.

" Could you doubt the impulse that must sway Lord Cranmore's determination the moment he was aware of your claims ?"

" Much time has passed since my letter—he didn't write again—it is your brother is persuading him, Miss Villars—I cannot bear the thought !" and she burst into an almost hysterical passion of tears.

" Compose yourself, pray dear Helen ! and rest assured whatever may happen, you owe nothing to any interference of

friends. Lord Cranmore is the soul of honour, and wants no other prompter."

"Is your brother then commissioned?—O! would he not write to me himself?"

"He has written—"

"When?—where?—O give me,—"
with wild earnestness perceiving the letter in Emily's hand.

The letter was directed to *the Lady Cranmore*. Emily gave it with the seal uppermost, and hastily left the room nearly overpowered by her own exertion.

Lord Cranmore wrote thus:

'Most involuntary has been my delay in acknowledging the claims you have with such unequalled generosity forborn to make. Be assured, dear Helen, the part you have acted has raised you in my affection and esteem to a degree, which it will be the business of my future life to prove.

'I have been detained in my way to

you, by a severe accident from which I am so nearly recovered that I hope very shortly to be able to follow the receipt of this letter. Meanwhile take care of yourself, and of our dear children; prepare them to see their father, and receive with your accustomed kindness him who grieves at the years of pain he has occasioned, and will study to make every amends in the power of

‘ Your truly affectionate,

‘ CRANMORE.’

With that intuitive perception of evil so peculiar to those long familiarised with misfortune, her eye instantly fell upon the words, ‘ severe accident,’ and wholly inattentive to all beside, she flew after Emily, exclaiming, “ Severe accident!— O! the blessed Virgin, he has met with a dreadful accident! tell me, tell me what, before I go distracted!”

“ Dear Helen, do not thus give way to alarm!” said Emily endeavouring to rally her own firmness; “ the effects of

the accident are so nearly overcome that Henry expects he will set forward to-morrow."

On hearing the detail of the accident, however, Helen, whose nerves were in a miserable state of irritation, gave way to paroxysms of fears and dreads, so very unreasonable, as finally to conquer Emily's forbearance; and in a tone of reproach she said :

" Surely there is a degree of ingratitude in thus courting unhappiness with a prospect of such unbounded felicity before you, as seldom falls to the lot of woman !"

" Felicity !—before *me* ?" cried Helen.

Emily deeply blushing at the strength of her own expression, replied, " Do not the contents of the letter answer to the superscription ?"

" What superscription ?" turning the letter she held in her hand to look at it,

“ Merciful heaven !—that name to me :
—oh ! it cannot, cannot ever be ! ”

And between sobs and screams, she fell into a violent hysteric fit.

Emily now called for Janet, and made her over to her care, feeling to want nearly as much herself.

During this time, Mrs. Villars had been opening to Mrs. Fitzclare a prospect of happiness gratifying beyond her hopes, which, however, she met with equanimity. In the rapidity of her recovery, within the last few days, the efficacy of content had been exemplified to an extraordinary degree. She was now so nearly restored to her natural state of health as to be fully adequate to take upon herself the tranquillising and strengthening of her daughter's mind for the (to her so new) trial of worldly prosperity, which now dawned upon her in colours sufficiently dazzling to unsettle steadier heads than that of poor Helen. It was agreed between them, that Mrs.

Villars with her daughter and Agatha, should set off the next morning by day-break without imparting the intention to Helen, to obviate all farther *combats de générosité* between the two uncommon rivals.

To this Emily readily assented, and they took their departure at sun-rise. Leaving a kindly explanatory note to be given to Helen at her awakening; whilst Emily more dead than alive should be retracing her sad steps to fly from a man whose mere presence would have been sufficient to illumine the darkest hour of her existence. And narrowly indeed, as will be seen, did she escape the meeting. She had tasked herself almost beyond the stretch of her physical powers; though a slight buoyancy of spirits was again fortunately imparted by the expectation of finding Henry at the Priory, whither he had repaired to justify Lord Cranmore to Mr. Villars, as he would have so much to impart on the only subject that

could at this moment excite any sort of interest.

Helen's tears had flowed in great abundance over this affectionate note. She was disappointed besides, in being deprived of the opportunity of communicating to Miss Villars a scheme she had been devising upon her pillow for the relief of all parties; which she conceived could not but be approved.

She now awaited her mother's rising with the most extreme impatience.

After bewailing in all the strength of her enthusiastic feelings, the loss of the friends she cherished in her very heart's core, she proceeded to inform her mother, "She had come to a determination of withdrawing herself from the possibility of encreasing by her presence the misery she had not the power to assuage."

"What mean you, my child?"

"In a convent I may lay down my head in peace, dear mother, and save Lord Cranmore from the hard necessity

of making a show of affection he no longer feels."

"Dear! generous! inconsiderate creature!—you have no right to make farther sacrifices. To replace your children in their proper station in the eye of the world is now your imperious duty."

"Lord Cranmore will himself do that—and you, dear mother, can so much better teach them what is right than the poor ignorant Helen, who feels herself a bar in every body's way—"

"Helen!—I know not how to understand!—is it possible resentment can dictate?"—

"Resentment!—oh, can you think so? against whom would I feel it? I only want to cause no more unhappiness."

"But we have no protestant convent Helen!"

"I would not mind going into a catholic one."

"Dearest child! is it possible to know so little of distinctions so important!"

Mrs. Fitzclare then entered with much earnestness upon the momentous subject which had hitherto engaged so small a portion of her daughter's thoughts.

Poor Helen wholly uninstructed, called herself a protestant, because in conformity to her lover's faith, she had gone into a protestant church ; but she now for the first time became sensible of the meaning of the word. She listened with attentive reverence to her mother's instructions, but expressed much reluctance to forego her plan.

Colonel Maxwell had gone to attend Mrs. Villars and Emily some part of their first day's journey.

At this unlucky moment Lord Cranmore and Lord Leonard arrived at Aberystwith.

With well-meant caution, the chaise stopped out of sight of the door ; and Lord Leonard proceeded alone to the lodging, to inquire for any of their friends who might have spared Helen the sudden.

ness of the first meeting ; no one was at hand but Janet, and, whilst she was engaged in consultation with him, the children had run out and caught sight not only of the chaise, but of who was in it, and returned bawling up to their mother's window, " Mamma !—mamma !—here's dear papa Sidney come !"

" Where !—where !"—cried the strongly agitated Helen, rushing down stairs and led by them towards the chaise.

Lord Cranmore no sooner perceived her than he alighted, and opening his arms to receive her, exclaimed—

" My much wronged Helen ! my true—my lawful wife !"

" With an eager spring into them she ejaculated, " O ! my Sidney !—this blissful moment indeed repays—"

She could utter no more—her vital powers had of late by such various revulsions been too strongly stimulated for her exhausted frame to support. She sunk lifeless upon his breast.

Fainting fits had become so usual with Helen, that the fatal truth did not immediately force itself upon the observation of those who by this time surrounded her; for the uproar of the children had drawn out both Janet and Lord Leonard—though too late to avert the mischief.

She was taken home, and every possible means resorted to for her recovery.

But in vain!—the thread of life snapped, and her enthusiastic spirit had fled, in a transport of rapture, to that abode where we are allowed to hope that innocence of intention may be pleaded in atonement of error.

CHAP. XX.

THE suddenness of this calamitous event entirely unmanned Lord Cranmore—in-
sensible to every surrounding object, he
wept like an infant.

Lord Leonard judiciously took away
the children, wishing to leave him for the
present to the full force of his feelings,
which were likely to find their most im-
mediate relief in an uncontrolled effusion
of tears.

Colonel Maxwell's surprise was only
equalled by his grief and vexation when,
at his return, he found the fatal effects of
his absence, in the woful havoc a few

short hours had made. To him, of course, devolved the painful task of breaking to Mrs. Fitzclare the sad catastrophe ; of which he could not but feel a degree of responsibility to attach to himself, for having even momentarily deserted the charge he had so faithfully engaged to Mrs. Villars and Emily to fulfil.

Mrs. Fitzclare's affliction was great, as may be supposed, but she was not wholly unprepared for parting with the blessing so lately recovered. The last few days had afforded sufficient cause for alarm, by bringing to her observation various indications of Helen's weak and declining state. Her religiously disposed mind, was not long in tracing the great mercies which attended this heavy deprivation. Helen had lived to see and deplore her error and be restored to character—and Mrs. Fitzclare was conscious that however integrity of principle had prompted Lord Cranmore's determination, it was not to be expected that real connubial felicity

could have resulted from their reunion. The mind of Helen was too unsusceptible of due regulation to give him any prospect of home enjoyments; whilst her strength of passion and delicacy of feeling were at the same time too much alive to what *had been*, to be satisfied with all that he would seek to substitute for love; the idea of the sacrifice he had made too, would ever have stood between her and happiness. There was reasonable ground for hope that *happiness* was now her daughter's everlasting portion; and Mrs. Fitzclare became resigned.

As the tumult of Lord Cranmore's feelings subsided, he recovered sufficient recollection to inquire for his children; and the sight of them proved in some degree soothing. "To you at least, my lovely babes, I can do full justice," he exclaimed; "Alas, that my injured Helen!—my heroic self-denying wife, should not have lived to enjoy at least *this* satisfaction!"—and his tears flowed afresh.

Nor could he escape the severest stings of remorse when he reflected on the magnitude of the injury, which, ignorantly and involuntarily, he had done to Helen. Her peace—her fame—her health—her life destroyed by him who had given her his hand, and who judging her unjustly, had withdrawn from her his heart. Then would her unparalleled disinterestedness flash anew upon his mind, in its most vivid colours; and the accumulation of these various feelings caused the shock of her death to sink as deep as if his whole stock of earthly felicity had actually centered in her.

He was very urgent with Colonel Maxwell to obtain him admittance to Mrs. Fitzclare the moment she was able to bear to see him. He believed he had schooled himself into a degree of self-controul that would secure his not increasing her distress by any thing he might say or do; but no sooner did he find himself in the presence of his lost

Helen's mother, than the most irresistible burst of grief impelled him on, to fall at the feet of the bereaved parent, and implore forgiveness.

She extended her hand, which was bedewed with his tears as he raised it to his lips; she motioned for him to rise—she could not speak; neither of them, indeed, were capable of giving utterance to their feelings. The scene was inexpressibly trying to both. Colonel Maxwell was peremptory in abridging it.

Every subsequent interview, however, became more and more consolatory to them. Lord Cranmore treated her with the affectionate deference of a son; and when he became acquainted with her history, and the great respectability of her mother's connexions, it afforded him considerable ease of mind in facilitating the communication he had to make to the Marquis of Kingsborough.

This distressing task he concluded with an earnest entreaty that the most

marked family honours which could be devised, might be paid to his wife's remains.

The Marquis readily concurred in directing every distinction that could best stamp the legitimacy of her offspring in the eye of the world.

She was embalmed ;—Lord Cranmore accompanied by his brother, attended the body to Castle Ormsby, where it lay in state for several days, and the obsequies were finally performed with all the solemn pomp that could be bestowed upon them. Nor can it be denied, that some alleviation was afforded to Lord Cranmore himself, in finding the mother of his children had been entitled to move in a far different sphere from that, in which her father's degraded habits had placed her.

On the day in which the melancholy procession had set out, Mrs. Fitzclare found herself able also to leave Aberystwith, with the children; and Colonel

Maxwell, who kindly attended them, had arranged such easy stages for their progress, as to remove all apprehension of any danger from fatigue.

Her reception at the Priory was cordial as the tenderest sympathy could make it. Emily's grief was deep and unfeigned; she mourned as for a sister; and the intense feeling with which she took the children to her heart cannot easily be imagined—raising her streaming eyes to heaven at the moment, as if renewing to the departed Helen her full acquiescence in the appeal their hapless parent had so repeatedly made to her affection for them; she brought forcibly to Mrs. Villars's mind those pathetic lines of Lord Littleton's,

‘That—that even now, above yon starry pole,
May touch with pleasure her immortal soul.’*

To dilate upon the heartfelt enjoyment experienced in this family reunion at

* Prologue to the tragedy of *Sophonisba*, acted for the benefit of Thomson's widow and children.

the Priory were assuredly superfluous ; a congenial mind can readily figure it, the uncongenial could not be made to understand it.

Agatha alone intermixed her expressions of delight in the arrival of her dear Fitz, and her young playfellows, with the constant repetition of her lamentations at the absence of her aunt and uncle—cousin Ned—without whom no joy ever appeared to her complete.

Indeed, aunt Katty too ! who had hitherto uniformly proceeded with that ‘ plentiful lack of thought ’ so natural to her, now found herself assailed and confounded by such an influx of ideas, that she scarce knew, as she said, whether she stood upon her head or her heels. “ To think how a marriage, which was no marriage, could come to be a marriage after all ! was one way or other, to her the most incomprehensible thing ! turn it as she might ! ”—no wonder poor Katty should find it difficult, when matters of

no very dissimilar nature have occasionally afforded food for discussion to far abler heads than hers.

In vain had Emily and Miss Maxwell endeavoured, at the expence of much argument and considerable loss of time, to make the matter intelligible to her; her judgment was so bewildered as to be quite impervious to a new or a distinct perception, though she was both clear and audible in “praising heaven for the *lucky chance* of taking the mother out of the way, or else what was to have become of poor Emily herself!”—and she finally derived some satisfaction from the assurance, that the advantages of the children were confined to the Scotch estates and title; and comforted herself with the recollection that “half a loaf is better than no bread—and she only wished the time was come that she might see the happy knot safely tied, and no more work about it.”

It will scarcely be supposed that Lord

Cranmore should have been wanting in every possible attention to the feelings of Emily under these sudden vicissitudes. His letters breathed all that the most refined passion could inspire, or the most scrupulous delicacy exact; but the editor of these memoirs, never having been able to obtain a sight of them, will not venture upon any substitution of her own. The sense and the nonsense of true love must, equally baffle the attempts of a mere narrator—who has outlived the days of sentimental illusions too!—and his Lordship was in the height of them. For a model of the Duke of Ulswater's tender effusions, had the original happened to be missing, a reference to some of the diurnal records of passing events might aptly and satisfactorily have furnished it; but sentiments such as Lord Cranmore's are of more rare occurrence; though doubtless many a young female reader must be possessed of *fac similes* from their own devoted admirers, to which

they will have the goodness to recur, as the only chance of doing justice to the correspondence that was daily followed up, till the auspicious moment arrived, when, having paid every duty to the remains of Helen, her widowed Lord felt himself at liberty to give the reins to his eager desire of once more casting himself at the feet of his soul's idol.

Katty's watchful eyes were first blessed with the sight of the carriage, whose rapid advance proclaimed the impatience of its owner to reach the goal of his wishes ; for Emily's agitation was too great to bear the torture of hourly expectation—she had shut herself up in her own apartment.

The scream of delight uttered by Katty, as she caught sight of the horses, brought every one to the window, which was, however, so filled by her own little square immoveable person, that the contents of the carriage were only apparent to herself as it approached ; and a second exclama-

tion, rather in a different tone, created some surprise.

“The powers be merciful to us! what’s coming now?”

And the chaise at this moment stopping at the door, a young woman alighted from it, with a child in her arms—which Lord Cranmore immediately took from her; and rushing into the room with it, he cast a hasty glance around for Emily; then, with something of disappointment, going up to Mrs. Villars, he said, “Lady Sabina’s poor deserted orphan!—dearest madam, is it presuming too much?—I could not, for my soul, resist bringing it away, without even waiting for an assent—I had vowed to protect it.”

“You are quite sure, I trust, of the warmth with which Emily will receive it,” was Mrs. Villars’s reply.

“But where? where is she?”

Emily was now summoned to the library, where the happy lovers were allowed some hours of uninterrupted

unalloyed felicity, only to be appreciated by minds pure, fervid and spotless as their own, ere they were again called upon to join the family circle.

Lord Cranmore had, before leaving Aberystwith, made a provision for his mother-in-law, such as left her nothing to wish ; and she was installed at the Priory Cottage, with her grandchildren, Agatha, and the little deserted infant, where Emily and Lord Cranmore spent much of their time.

Day now succeeded to day in unabated enjoyment. Tranquillity in every heart ; serenity on every brow.

CHAP. XXI.

THE constantly improving accounts of Sir Edward Arundel's health made no inconsiderable addition to the happiness of the Priory fire-side. He experienced the wondrous efficacy of a balsam not to be matched in the whole pharmacopœia—perfect peace of mind. Each morn his eyes opened on the loved object on which they could for ever dwell, and found her whole undivided attention centered in him—solicitous to anticipate his every wish. Death alone could now dissolve this 'sober certainty of waking bliss.'

On Sophia's part, the daily increasing hope of final recovery attuned her soul to harmony with every human being ; and the recollection of Patty now rose to her mind, with a keen sense of reprobation of her own injustice, in giving way to the unreasonable prejudice that had banished from her sight, one who had deserved so well of her, and given many unquestionable proofs both of integrity and attachment. Her late change of situation gave her an opportunity of sending both Patty and her mother a token of kindness, in a wedding present ; accompanied by a conciliatory note, expressive of her wish to see them at the Priory whenever Sir Edward should be sufficiently recovered to join the domestic circle there, and with this she quieted her conscience for the present.

As he became more able to enjoy society, she put in her claims for Emily and Agatha to join her in town. Agatha was out of her wits with joy to find the

proposal agreed to. Colonel and Miss Maxwell accompanied them, as well as Lord Cranmore and Henry.

It was settled that Emily and Agatha should take up their abode at Mrs. Valacort's, as the morning lessons, intermixed with hours of pretty active recreation, could better be admitted of there, than in the house of an invalid ; and there also Lord Cranmore of course, had *les entrées libres* the moment those lessons were over.

The evening meetings of the friendly circle in Brook-street no ways fell short in social happiness of that which the Priory had lately afforded ; Mr. Valacort often, and Mrs. Valacort not unfrequently (when dinner engagements did not interfere) joining the agreeable groupe, which she could not but acknowledge made a pleasant variety at least, in her habitual pursuits. Being now fully satisfied with Emily's prospect, she no longer insisted upon dragging her into that world with

whose avocations she had not one idea in common ; and indeed, it must in justice to Mrs. Valacort be said, that she did not herself suffer those avocations to obliterate every serious thought, as she had heretofore done ; her Sunday mornings were somewhat better employed ; her regularity was no longer wholly confined to her visiting list, nor was blue-stockingsism so exclusively reprobated as it had been. In short, although it cannot be averred that she was yet qualified to pass muster in the very domestic circle at the Priory, she so tempered her dissipated pursuits as to afford those most interested in her, good grounds to hope that she might finally subside into an unexceptionable rational being.

When the time came for removing Sir Edward to Bath for the benefit of the waters, Colonel and Miss Maxwell attended their friends thither ; whilst Emily returned with Agatha into Hampshire, to resume her share in the cares of Mrs.

Fitzclare. Boxmount Cottage, of course, received its Lord with the determination not again to quit it, till he should feel himself entitled with propriety to claim the hand from which every blessing of his future life was to flow.

Bath proved as beneficial as had been hoped for. The exfoliations from the jaw had ceased, and Sir Edward became capable of taking more solid nourishment. The physicians now deemed the baths of Barège, together with a winter in a more southern climate, likely to be of use in restoring the power of the leg. This was instantly resolved on; and a few weeks allotted to the Priory previous to undertaking the journey.

Sophia here showed herself to her family, in a light so new, and so beautiful, as quite filled up the measure of their happiness. To her originally impetuous and decided manner, was substituted a quiet, attentive, unremitting assiduity in watching every turn of her

Arundel's countenance, which at times indicated a degree of suffering he would fain have concealed from her; but she as sedulously sought to relieve it with a tenderness, a gentleness, that combined some of Emily's milder graces with the Juno-like dignity of Sophia's natural appearance.

Nor was the reparation due to Patty any longer neglected. Sir Edward's chaise was sent to bring her and her mother to the Priory; where the kindness of their reception soon effaced the sorrow which had hung heavy on the heart of the good girl, from having been so abruptly, and to her so unaccountably, driven from the presence of her beloved lady.

Mary Benson was not slow to impart a prospect of establishment that had opened for her daughter; a respectable young tradesman, whose father was in a good way of business, had made overtures, and as Patty "seemed to think well of him," Mary only waited the sanction of

her patronesses at the Priory to accept him for a son-in-law. The sanction was not withheld ; neither was it unaccompanied with what was likely to make Patty as agreeable an object in the eyes of the prudent father, as she before was in those of the enamoured son.

Aunt Katty's wonderments occasionally broke forth, to form a diverting contrast to the unqualified satisfaction that reigned in every other bosom. " Well, for her part !—the unaccountableness of some people !—refusing point-blank to marry him, when my heart and soul were so set upon it, and he in a whole skin as a body may say ;—and now to go and make a sick nurse of yourself for life !—for you can't deny, my dear, but it must be very inconvenient, though, to do you justice, it must be said you do it so prettily one might almost think there was nothing you liked better." " And not be much mistaken either, dear aunt ; but you

assume my refusal—for he never asked me,” was the playful answer.

“ Merciful sirs, don’t tell me such a thing as that ! when any mortal that had eyes in their head might have seen that if he had had as many lives as that old Plutarch my brother was reading of, he would have been ready to lay them every one down for your sake.”

But enough of good Katty’s nonsense ! so near the close of a narrative which it is earnestly hoped may have awakened some interest for the *Dramatis Personæ*, it is not fair to waste any more of the reader’s patience upon it.

When the time drew nigh for Sir Edward and Lady Arundel’s departure for the continent, she prevailed upon Miss Maxwell to accompany them. Colonel Maxwell and Henry Villars having volunteered their services, the friendly party set forth, with eager and anxious hopes for the favourable result of their journey.

Fain—very fain, would Sophia have taken her little darling with her; but this required her grand-father's concurrence, which he was by no means inclined to grant; adding, in answer to the application made to him, that so far from agreeing to Agatha's being taken out of the kingdom, he must insist upon having her at Rock Castle, now that he found she had a governess to keep her in order.

Lady Arundel could certainly no longer have the same fears of Rock Castle, if Mrs. Fitzclare accompanied Agatha thither; but she so strongly felt the pain this amiable woman would experience in a separation from her grand-children, that she had not the heart to impart to her the contents of the letter. This very forbearance, however, betrayed the matter to her friend, who hesitated not a moment to sacrifice her own enjoyment to the advantage of Agatha, and made light of the effort, by stating the impossi-

bility of her having a moment's anxiety in leaving her grand-children under such unremitting attention as Emily was in the habit of paying to them.

And so the affair was settled ; Mrs. Fitzclare setting out for Rock Castle with Agatha the day before that which was fixed for the departure of the continental travellers. These now bent their course to the south of France, as rapidly as might be without danger of over-fatigue to the invalid.

The invigorating air and clear atmosphere of the continent produced almost instantaneous beneficial effects. Barêges did wonders. They spent their winter at Montpellier ;—visited Switzerland in the spring ; and the following autumn passed over into Italy ; where Sophia had the inexpressible joy of finding Sir Edward able to take his share in every research and object of curiosity that attracted their notice.

And there it was that the tidings for

which Sophia most anxiously looked were finally received, of the long protracted union between Lord Cranmore and Emily having taken place. Lord Cranmore, with the delicacy so conspicuous in every part of his conduct, had refrained from urging the celebration of their nuptials, till the full period should have elapsed that respect for the memory of Helen could claim. Emily well understood and honoured the motives of this forbearance; and when he at length allowed himself to plead his suit, she referred him with her characteristic simplicity to her mother for naming the day that should make them one; only stipulating for the absence of all parade on the solemn occasion.

This condition met the ready acquiescence of all but aunt Katty, whose utmost powers of eloquence were called up to oppose it—but in vain. The only exemption she could obtain was in favour of bride-cake, and she sought her conso-

lation in superintending its composition, which she was determined should at least be the richest that ever graced a wedding.

The sun seemed to rise with more than its accustomed splendour on the auspicious morn that lighted the family of the Priory to the little parish church of Hurstbourne, as if emulous to vie with the bright beams of happiness that illumined every countenance. Never was promise of matrimonial felicity fairer! for it was grounded on that pure basis of

‘ Perfect esteem, enlivened by desire
Ineffable, and sympathy of soul.’

Every impediment that had arisen to their union having only served to raise each in the opinion of the other. And safely may it be predicted, that happiness such as this, will prove as durable as it is perfect.

The travellers, after passing eighteen months in the most interesting pursuits

and uninterrupted enjoyments; now turned their thoughts and steps towards that full fruition of true comfort, which is only to be found in *home*.

They had accomplished the object of their journey to the utmost extent of their hopes and wishes. Sir Edward's health and strength were perfectly restored; the lameness scarcely perceptible; and the wound in his face no more of a blemish than any soldier might covet.

Impatience now urged them on; they gave but a very limited time to Paris, and were proceeding to Calais with all speed, when the danger of one of the springs of the carriage giving way, obliged them to stop at a small village short of Amiens, to have it made secure.

A crowd never fails to assemble upon such an occasion; but one woman in particular eagerly pressed forward, exclaiming,

“ *C'est une voiture Anglaise! au nom de*

Dieu laissez-moi approcher ! ames charitables ! bonnes Miladys ! pour l'amour du ciel daignez descendre ! C'est une pauvre femme de votre nation qui est à toute extrémité, et ne veut pas se faire administrer ! le bon Dieu aye pitié de sa pauvre ame !"

The kind-hearted urgency of the poor woman interested them all, and they instantly alighted and followed to her cottage ; where the dying woman lay stretched upon a miserable pallet, which as Lady Arundel and Miss Maxwell approached, they were horror-struck. Gracious God ! could they credit their senses ! was it indeed Lady Sabina ?—the high-born, high-bred Lady Sabina ! so lately the brilliant star of fashion ! the idol of surrounding crowds, they now saw !—sunk in squallid wretchedness—on the very brink of the grave ! a nearly expiring infant lying across her breast, seeking in vain the nourishment no longer there !

Sophia stood lost in speechless amaze-

ment : the wretched sufferer, on recognising her, endeavoured to conceal her face in the bed-clothes, faintly articulating, " Leave me !—leave me !—no one can do me any good !"

" Leave you !" repeated Sophia, in a voice of the tenderest commiseration ; " not, indeed, till we see every possible care taken of you and your hapless babe ! Where ?—where is captain Woodland ?"

" O, name him not ! the vilest of men ! He has basely abandoned me to want and misery of every kind ; and but for this poor creature, who has taken me into her hovel, I might have perished with my infant by the road-side—"

Miss Maxwell had, during this time, taken the poor baby, and was endeavouring to feed it with milk she had seen warming on the fire.

Inquiry was immediately made for a physician ; there was none nearer than Amiens. Sir Edward's courier was dispatched for him.

Meanwhile Lady Sabina appeared in so feeble a state, that no attempt at moving her could be hazarded on unsanctioned by the physician ; but Sophia causing her medicine chest to be brought, ventured to administer some gentle cordials, of which however, her own compassionate kind treatment proved the most efficacious in producing a temporary alleviation of the broken-heartedness, under which the unhappy woman was sinking.

“ If the poor infant can be rescued from death and from its cruel father, it's all I have to hope,” she said : “ Nothing can save *me* ; and if I knew what would, I should reject it ; but I entreat you relieve me from the persecutions of these ignorant wretches, who want to force their priest upon me ; they cannot comprehend that a protestant may be saved—”

“ Shall I inquire whether there may be any protestant clergyman within reach ?” said Sophia.

“O, no! thank you!—all those death-bed scenes are such frightful things!—the very thoughts of it makes me feel worse again already.”

Sophia shuddered at the idea that crossed her mind, on finding Lady Sabina, with the same absence of religious principle and carelessness of duties that had marked her life, now daring to call herself of a religion, of which not even calamity seemed to have awakened a sense in her breast.

During the time that elapsed before the physician could arrive, Lady Sabina had at broken intervals imparted as much as her weakness could allow, of the ill usage she had met with from Captain Woodland; but so interwoven with imprecations and prayers for revenge (the only ones she seemed to have any disposition to utter), that it may be more agreeable to the reader to have the odious recital in as few words as may be.

Captain Woodland, wholly disap-

pointed in the ambitious views which had led him to marry her immediately upon the divorce—finding her cast off by her family as a disgrace to their name; and damages awarded, which, however trifling he was unable to pay; had sold out of the army and taken her abroad, with the intention of establishing a gambling house in partnership with a profligate Frenchman, with whom he had contracted an intimacy during emigration, in the expectation of making his wife's beauty the decoy to bring customers to the gaming table. Unprincipled as she had proved herself, she still shrunk from this last stage of degradation; but he had power sufficient over her to make her write letters to her brothers dictated by him, setting forth their pecuniary distresses; and drawing a picture of conjugal felicity which had not for one moment followed the disgraceful nuptials. These applications were constantly answered by supplies of money, which he as constantly seized upon and

squandered—and when she at length also refused to be made the tool of this dupery, he had proceeded to personal ill usage; and finally turned her out of doors with two louis in her pocket, brutally telling her she might beg her way back to England if her beauty could not help her to the means of getting there on easier terms. At this time she was in the last stage of her pregnancy, and only entreated for house-room till she should be recovered; but the unfeeling savage said she had never been induced to consider his benefit in any thing, so she might take the consequence, for he would not expose himself to having a brat to provide for; and he literally forced her into the street.

She had got as far on her way as the village, where she was now found, when over-fatigue had brought on pains that would have caused the child to be born by the road-side, but for the compassion of the poor woman, who had taken her

in, and attended upon her with true Christian charity, of which, however, Lady Sabina seemed to be fast losing the consciousness in her complaints of the persecution she underwent to induce her to submit to extreme unction.

While Lady Arundel was receiving this shocking detail, and Miss Maxwell feeding and hushing the poor babe to sleep, and the gentlemen had been reconnoitering, whether any decent habitation were at hand, to which the invalid might be removed; a *vacarme* burst forth in the kitchen, ill according with the painful death-bed scene; which Sophia was compelled for a moment to leave, to ascertain what it might mean.

There she beheld Victoire capering about, like a mad creature, embracing the old woman at every turn with screams of delight.

“Have you lost your senses?” her lady exclaimed with some displeasure.

“*Ah mon dieu! mon dieu, my lady!—*

c'est que c'est Marion Berard ! ah quel coup du ciel ! qui l'auroit jamais cru !"

"For heaven's sake be still ! and tell me who is Marion Berard !"

"Oh, she's mother to my beloved Guillaume, *que je tenois pour gâillotiné, et point du tout, c'est qu'il s'est distingué, and been raised from the ranks, and made a captain ; et voila le sort qui m'attend ! je serai enfin Madame la Capitaine !*"

"Et cette bonne fille ne compte pour rien, un œil et une main de moins !" said Marion.

"O mon dieu non !" said the tender-hearted Victoire, "*parceque voyez-vous bien avec le traitement de Capitaine on a de quoi se faire servir ; et un borgne peut encore se donner le plaisir des spectacles ; et un manchot peut encore jouir de la promenade et nous nous amuserons depuis le matin jusqu'au soir je vous en reponds.*"

The prospect of Victoire's amusements could not at this very serious moment

bring a smile upon Sophia's countenance, and she authoritatively imposed silence, which Victoire thought "*un peu dur.*"

The physician now arrived, and without hesitation pronounced the case of Lady Sabina to be desperate; and expressed much doubt of the life of the child. All that the utmost good-will could do for either, he said, was to procure such alleviations of suffering as the situation they were in would admit of; an attempt at removal might prove instantly fatal. This opinion was delivered with caution out of the hearing of the patient, who seemed anxious, notwithstanding what she had at first said, to be saved from any increase of apprehension; and before he came, had begged of Sophia, that if he said any thing very alarming, she might not be told of it.

There was a *château* in the neighbourhood, with the master of which the physician was well acquainted; additional mattresses and conveniences of various

kinds were obtained from thence ; and the family being absent, and well known for their charity and hospitality, he made no scruple of putting the travellers into possession of it for a few days, as they seemed so anxious to await the event.

They were not long detained; for on the third day, this wretched victim of vanity and want of principle breathed her last ; and the poor infant, notwithstanding the tenderest care of Miss Maxwell, who had taken the entire charge of it, outlived its miserable parent but a few hours.

They only staid to secure every thing being done in the best manner for the deceased, of which circumstances would admit. Marion Berard was handsomely rewarded for her compassionate cares ; and Victoire made over to her happy prospects : Sir Edward having made a considerable addition to the means of amusement, to which she so eagerly looked forward ; and his charming wife

really rejoicing to leave her well provided for, as she had made herself very useful during their travels, although evidently not actuated by motives in themselves sufficiently attaching to have given rise in her lady to any wish for her continued services.

CHAP. XXII.

THE travellers now uninterruptedly pursued their route, and finally reached the Priory, where they were received with transports that baffle description.

Aunt Katty's joyful exclamations were of course the most audible; it was absolutely in screams that she uttered her delight, on seeing "Sir Edward Arundel looking for all the world just like any body else!—and walking upon both legs! and from the very bottom of her heart she congratulated him upon the recovery of his jawbone!"

If Mrs. Valacort judged rightly in sup-

posing the bent of Miss Maxwell's education was to qualify her for a life of single blessedness, certainly Lady Sarah deviated from her habitual good judgment in allowing her to join the continental party; for dangerous to the security of the heart is the daily and hourly intercourse and similarity of pursuit in travelling! Henry Villars and Marianne Maxwell were not long in proving the truth of this assertion. She certainly was not the 'counterpart of his sister Emily,' that Henry had declared himself 'prepared to fall in love with;' but when did love ever take the prepared way! neither did he tumble headlong into the tender passion, as he had expected to do. It worked its way by such imperceptible degrees, that he was never more surprised than in detecting the extraordinary sensation of misery that took possession of him, as the day approached that was to separate their happy party. On her part, her natural quickness of

observation had not failed to penetrate through the reserve of Henry's manners to the graces of his mind, so that his participation had soon become indispensable to her every enjoyment. Colonel Maxwell observed the growing partiality on both sides with delight, and it will not be supposed that any difficulties arose with Mr. and Mrs. Villars, or Lady Sarah Maxwell, when appealed to for their concurrence, to link two more votaries in Hymen's rosy fetters; for never did his chains play lighter on hearts, than over those now so happily reunited at the Priory.

The presence of Agatha and Mrs. Fitzclare was not long wanting to complete the domestic groupe; and with the surprising addition of Mr. Arundel himself! He was become the most devoted slave to Mrs. Fitzclare's will and pleasure, whose anxious aim was to conciliate the various wishes of those most immediately concerned in Agatha's welfare; her mild

sense and gentle manners had so won upon his favour, during her stay at Rock Castle, as to leave her not only the uncontrolled direction of his grandchild, but the most entire command, had she chosen to assume it, of all the old gentleman's possessions, clogged only with the condition of accepting his hand into the bargain. This, however, she had steadily resisted, to the great wonder and admiration of Mrs. Arundel, whose jealous fears had made her sufficiently disagreeable on the first discovery of her cousin's inclinations, but who was now ready to worship the disinterestedness she could not at all comprehend.

Having secured such a fund of heartfelt happiness to all those who may have created themselves an interest with the reader in the course of these pages, it still remains to fulfil the less pleasing duty of an accurate biographer, in winding up the fate of some other personages,

who have proved of too much importance to be passed over.

To take up as little time as possible with Lady Laura, it will be sufficient to say, that continuing to be foiled in her matrimonial speculations, she is fast sinking from a mortified, into a neglected coquette; and now verging on the desperation of old maidenhood, a crabbed discontent is gradually taking possession of her features, which will very decidedly exclude *her* from ranking with the happy phalanx of Lady Sarah Maxwell.

Lord Belmont, with no worse original propensity than an inordinate vanity and a deficiency of principle, had fallen imperceptibly to himself from the fair promise of his youth. Emily had been the day-star that called his ephemeral virtues into being; they died away as her influence was withdrawn, and left him to sink by degrees into the degraded state of a mere fashionable profligate. Tricked, out of the woman that would

have embellished his existence — disgraced in his matrimonial connexion — plundered, and then deserted by the worthless female he had subsequently selected, more for her celebrity than any other charm ; his health is falling a rapid sacrifice to the excesses in which the wretched blank of his enervated mind involves him ; he turns with horror from the poor infant who might yet give an interest to his hours, because he does not believe it his own ; not having the candour to ascribe his wife's misconduct, in the first instance, to her mortified vanity at his early neglect of her, but allows himself to suppose she was never for a moment faithful to him. The present division of his time, between the bottle and the gaming table, is already producing symptoms of premature old age, which will shortly leave his father to the severe consciousness of having by his worldly-mindedness counteracted talents that might have reflected honour upon him.

self and upon his family ; or rather leave the world so to moralize, for the Earl of Saltland is not of a disposition to trace back misfortune to any error of his own ; he can only curse his stars ! and arraign the justice of Providence.

The sting of disappointment, however, sinks deep in the overturn of all his ambitious views for the aggrandisement of his family ; in vain does he urge his son to make a second choice ; the very name of matrimony is grating to his ear ; and the Earl in bitterness of spirit gives way to a state of depression that verges upon hypochondrium, under which the resources of his Countess are not likely to afford him much relief.

The union of Lord Leonard Ormsby with his lively well-jointured Irish widow is productive of as much conjugal happiness as the avocations of high life allow time for ; their mutual liking had arisen from the most received notions ; on her part it rested on his rank, handsome per-

son, and lively conversation ; on his, on her agreeable attractive manners, avowed admiration of him, and ‘ though last, not least,’ considerable jointure !—their inclinations are fortunately suited ; and to their credit be it told, their relish for each other’s society decidedly outlived that first fashionable fortnight of seclusion, which has so frequently summed up the whole of domestic enjoyment the ‘ happy couples’ have ever known or cared for. They have already celebrated more than one anniversary of their marriage, and actually continue to see each other some part of most days ; express an interest in each other’s pursuits ; and are generally quoted in their respective fine sets as patterns of conjugal felicity.

The prospect of Mr. and Mrs. Valacort, in this respect, has brightened considerably under the influence of their new niece, Mrs. H. Villars, who proves a most able auxiliary in carrying on what Emily had,

with the assistance of the broken arm, so happily begun ; for although this fashionable pair were contriving to hurry through life in a way that left no immediate leisure for a consciousness of solid deficiencies, they had 'that within' which would finally have made them sensible of the hollowness of the world to which they so entirely leaned, when it might have been too late to find any rest in more rational pursuits.

Should any fair critic, in her zeal for poetic justice, deem that in leaving Colonel Maxwell to the forlorn condition of an old bachelor, he is not dealt with according to his merit ; she is requested to bear in mind that such a niece as Marianne, having selected for him such a nephew as Henry, and by their joint urgency obtained his making their house his home, nothing can be less like the natural fate of an isolated individual than that which seems to await him ; even should Mrs. Fitzclare abide as steadily

by her objections to a second engagement, as she had professed in the case of Mr. Arundel ; but the real fact is, that at this present writing every member of the Villars' family are inclined to believe her not wholly indifferent to the impression her virtues have made upon the Colonel ; and however wary his long knowledge of the world has made him, it very clearly appears that he no longer shrinks as formerly in dread of Benedict's fate.

Leave we the result to his deserts and his friends.

Having now adverted to all those who are entitled to excite any interest in these pages, one observation remains to be made before laying down the pen, lest a suspicion should have arisen of a deficiency in the author, of that laudable zeal for moral improvement which converts so many works professing to be novels, into homilies. The honest truth then is, that with all possible respect for

such good intentions, Lady Humdrum (whatever anticipations to the contrary, her name may have suggested) dissents from the expediency of thus attempting to trick the world into goodness; inas-much as the end is apt to be so cruelly defeated by the wicked propensity in the novel readers of these our days, to skip, whenever a little *tirade* of salutary preach-ment obtrudes itself; or by the equally subversive effect on such occasions of a gentle doze stealing over the faculties of the more determined readers, who wade through thick and thin.

It is purposely, therefore, that many an opportunity of enforcing a precept, or 'pointing a moral to the heart,' has been passed by; but it is earnestly hoped, that neither the pious *self-control* of Emily (at all times its own reward, and in her, so highly rewarded), nor the dangerous *self-confidence* of Sophia, in which *her* all of happiness was so nearly wrecked, will miss their aim for trusting

the application to the sagacity of those readers, who, even in a work of this trifling description, may happen to look for improvement ; whilst those who merely seek amusement, will undoubtedly give their sanction to the plan of keeping the narrative unbroken, and leaving the heroines to preach only by their example.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Vol. I.

- Page 22. line 6. for 'Valcort,' read 'Valacort.'
58. l. 15. for 'could but,' read 'could not but.'
73. l. 1. for 'i,' read 'it.'
148. l. 3. after 'effect,' add 'Mr. Villars rejoined.'
273. l. 4. for 'setting,' read 'sitting.'
367. l. 8. for 'assidious,' read 'assiduous.'

Vol. II.

- Page 81. line 18. for 'enquires,' read 'inquiries.'
232. l. 10. for 'when,' read 'where.'
247. l. 5. for 'ettiquette,' read 'etiquette.'
278. l. 2. for 'bachelor ! in short,' read 'bachelor in short !'
321. l. 9. for 'proportionally,' read 'proportionably.'

Vol. III.

- Page 122. line 3. for 'seduct on,' read 'seduction.'
127. l. 14. for des ination,' read 'destination.'
172. l. 19. for 'sorrow,' read 'sorrows.'
323. l. 8. for 'uncontrollably,' read 'uncontrolledly.'
337. l. 11. for 'life snapped,' read 'life had snapped.'
354. l. 17. for 'unexceptionable,' read 'unexceptionably.'
391. l. 15. for 'Hypochondrium,' read 'Hypochondria.'





